

The

FROZEN DEEP

BY

WILKIE COLLINS




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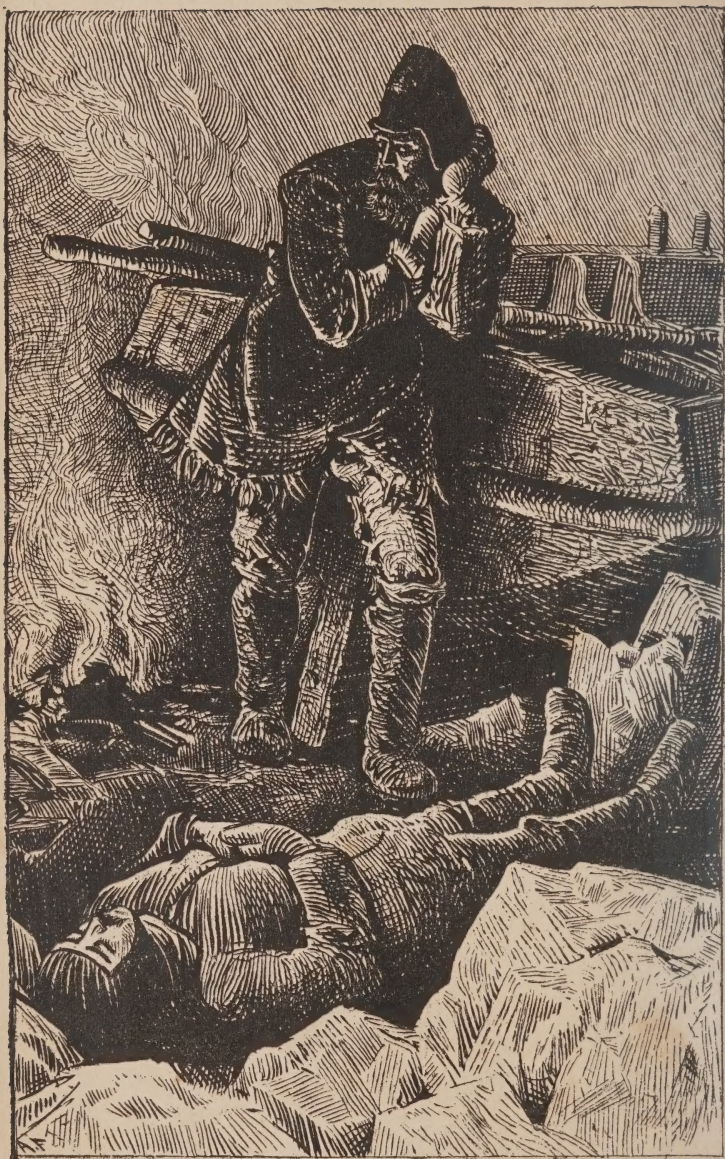
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"The shadow of the deathly thought grows and darkens over his face. He waits with his hands on the boat, — waits and thinks."— Page 114.

THE FROZEN DEEP.

BY

WILKIE COLLINS,

AUTHOR OF "THE WOMAN IN WHITE," "NO NAME," "ARMADALE," "THE NEW
MAGDALEN," ETC.

BOSTON:

WILLIAM F. GILL AND COMPANY,

SUCCESSORS TO THE OLD STAND OF SHEPARD AND GILL,

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CONTENTS.

	FIRST SCENE.	PAGE.
THE BALLROOM		11
	SECOND SCENE.	
THE HUT OF "THE SEA-MEW"		58
	THIRD SCENE.	
THE ICEBERG		111
	FOURTH SCENE.	
THE GARDEN		115
	FIFTH SCENE.	
THE BOAT-HOUSE		144

THE FROZEN DEEP.

A DRAMATIC STORY, IN FIVE SCENES.

INTRODUCTORY LINES.

(Relating the Adventures and Transformations of "The Frozen Deep.")

AS long ago as the year 1856, I wrote a play called "The Frozen Deep."

The work was first represented by amateur actors, at the house of the late Charles Dickens, on the 6th of January, 1857. Mr. Dickens himself played the principal part, and played it with a truth, vigor, and pathos never to be forgotten by those who were fortunate enough to witness the performance. The other personages of the story were represented by the ladies of Mr. Dickens's family; by the late Mark Lemon (editor of Punch); by the late Augustus Egg, R.A. (the artist); and by the author of the play.

The next appearance of "The Frozen Deep" (played by the amateur company) took place at the Gallery of

Illustration, Regent Street, before the Queen and the royal family, by the Queen's own command. After this special performance, other representations of the work were given; first at the Gallery of Illustration, subsequently (with professional actresses) in some of the principal towns in England, for the benefit of the family of a well-beloved friend of ours, who died in 1857, — the late Douglas Jerrold. At Manchester the play was twice performed; on the second evening, in the presence of three thousand spectators. This was, I think, the finest of all the representations of "The Frozen Deep." The extraordinary intelligence and enthusiasm of the great audience stimulated us all to do our best. Dickens surpassed himself. The trite phrase is the true phrase to describe that magnificent piece of acting. He literally electrified the audience.

I present here, as "a curiosity" which may be welcome to some of my readers, a portion of the original play-bill of the performance at Manchester. To me it has now become one of the saddest memorials of the past that I possess. Of the nine amateur actors who played the men's parts (one of them my brother, all of them my valued friends), but two are now living besides myself, — Mr. Charles Dickens, jun., and Mr. Edward Pigott.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE LATE MR. DOUGLAS JERROLD.

FREE TRADE HALL.

UNDER THE MANAGEMENT OF MR. CHARLES DICKENS.

On FRIDAY Evening, Aug. 21, and on SATURDAY Evening,
Aug. 22, 1857,

AT EIGHT O'CLOCK EXACTLY,

Will be presented an entirely new Romantic Drama, in three Acts, by

MR. WILKIE COLLINS,

CALLED

THE FROZEN DEEP.

The Overture composed expressly for this Piece by Mr. FRANCESCO BERGER, who will conduct the Orchestra.

The Dresses by MESSRS. NATHAN, of Titchbourne Street, Haymarket, and MISS WILKINS, of Carburton St., Fitzroy Square. Perruquier, MR. WILSON, of the Strand.

CAPTAIN EBSWORTH (<i>of the "Sea-Mew"</i>)	. Mr. EDWARD PIGOTT.
CAPTAIN HOLDING (<i>of the "Wanderer"</i>)	. Mr. ALFRED DICKENS.
LIEUTENANT CRAYFORD	Mr. MARK LEMON.
FRANK ALDERSLEY	Mr. WILKIE COLLINS.
RICHARD WARDOUR	Mr. CHARLES DICKENS.
LIEUTENANT STEVENTON	Mr. YOUNG CHARLES.*
JOHN WANT (<i>Ship's Cook</i>)	Mr. AUGUSTUS EGG.
BATESON } (<i>two of the "Sea-Mew's" people</i>)	{ Mr. SHIRLEY BROOKS,
DARKER }	{ Mr. CHARLES COLLINS.

(OFFICERS AND CREWS OF THE "SEA-MEW" AND "WANDERER.")

MRS. STEVENTON	Mrs. GEORGE VINING.
ROSE EBSWORTH	Miss ELLEN SABINE.
LUCY CRAYFORD	Miss ELLEN TERNAN.
CLARA BURNHAM	Miss MARIA TERNAN.
NURSE ESTHER	Mrs. TERNAN.
MAID	Miss MEWTE.†

The Scenery and Scenic Effects of the First Act by MR. TELBIN.

The Scenery and Scenic Effects of the Second and Third Acts by MR. STANFIELD, R.A.

* A facetious nickname, invented by Dickens for his eldest son.

† Another nickname by Dickens, for a young lady who had nothing to say.

The country performances being concluded, nearly ten years passed before the footlights shone again on "The Frozen Deep." In 1866 I accepted a proposal, made to me by Mr. Horace Wigan, to produce the play (with certain alterations and additions) on the public stage, at the Olympic Theatre, London. The first performance took place (while I was myself absent from England) on the 27th of November, in the year just mentioned. Mr. H. Neville acted the part "created" by Dickens.

Seven years passed after the production of the play at the Olympic Theatre; and then "The Frozen Deep" appeared once more to public favor, in another country than England, and under a totally new form.

I occupied the autumn and winter of 1873-74, most agreeably to myself, by a tour in the United States of America; receiving from the generous people of that great country a reception which I shall remember proudly and gratefully to the end of my life. During my stay in America, I read in public, in the principal cities, one of my shorter stories (enlarged and re-written for the purpose), called "The Dream Woman." * Concluding my tour at Boston, I was advised by my friends to give, if possible, a special attraction to my farewell reading in America, by presenting to my audience a new work. Having this object in view, and having but a short space of time at my disposal, I bethought myself of "The Frozen

* The publication of "The Dream Woman" will follow the publication of "The Frozen Deep."

Deep." The play had never been published ; and I determined to re-write it in narrative form, for a public reading. The experiment proved, on trial, to be far more successful than I had ventured to anticipate. Occupying nearly two hours in its delivery, the transformed "Frozen Deep" kept its hold, from first to last, on the interest and the sympathies of the audience. I hope to have future opportunities of reading it in my own country, as well as in the United States.

Proposals having lately been made to me, in England and in America, to publish my "readings," I here present them, beginning with "The Frozen Deep." The stories, as I print them, are, in both instances, considerably longer than the stories as I read them ; the limits of time, in the case of a public reading, rendering it imperatively necessary to abridge without mercy developments of character and incident, which are essential to the due presentation of a work in its literary form. I have only to add—for the benefit of those who may have seen, and who may not have forgotten, the play—that the narrative version of "The Frozen Deep" departs widely from the treatment of the story in the first act of the dramatic version, but (with the one exception of the third scene) follows the play as closely as possible in the succeeding acts.

W. C.

LONDON, August, 1874.

THE STORY.

FIRST SCENE.

THE BALLROOM.

CHAPTER I.

THE date is between twenty and thirty years ago. The place is an English seaport. The time is night. And the business of the moment dancing.

The mayor and corporation of the town are giving a grand ball, in celebration of the departure of an arctic expedition from their port. The ships of the expedition are two in number, "The Wanderer," and "The Sea-Mew." They are to sail (in search of the north-west passage) on the next day, with the morning tide.

Honor to the mayor and corporation! It is a brilliant ball. The band is complete. The room is spacious. The large conservatory opening out of it is pleasantly lit with Chinese lan-

terns, and beautifully decorated with shrubs and flowers. All officers of the army and navy who are present wear their uniforms in honor of the occasion. Among the ladies, the display of dresses (a subject which the men don't understand) is bewildering; and the average of beauty (a subject which the men do understand) is the highest average attainable, in all parts of the room.

For the moment the dance which is in progress is a quadrille. General admiration selects two of the ladies who are dancing, as its favorite objects. One is a dark beauty in the prime of womanhood, the wife of First-Lieut. Crayford of "The Wanderer." The other is a young girl, pale and delicate, dressed simply in white, with no ornament on her head but her own lovely brown hair. This is Miss Clara Burnham, an orphan. She is Mrs. Crayford's dearest friend; and she is to stay with Mrs. Crayford during the lieutenant's absence in the arctic regions. She is now dancing, with the lieutenant himself for partner, and with Mrs. Crayford and Capt. Holding (commanding officer of "The

Wanderer") for *vis-à-vis*, — in plain English, for opposite couple.

The conversation between Capt. Holding and Mrs. Crayford, in one of the intervals of the dance, turns on Miss Burnham. The captain is greatly interested in Clara. He admires her beauty; but he thinks her manner, for a young girl, strangely serious and subdued. Is she in delicate health?

Mrs. Crayford shakes her head, sighs mysteriously, and answers,

"In *very* delicate health, Capt. Holding."

"Consumptive?"

"Not in the least."

"I am glad to hear that. She is a charming creature, Mrs. Crayford. She interests me indescribably. If I was only twenty years younger, — perhaps (as I am *not* twenty years younger) I had better not finish the sentence. Is it indiscreet, my dear lady, to inquire what *is* the matter with her?"

"It might be indiscreet on the part of a stranger," said Mrs. Crayford. "An old friend like you may make any inquiries. I wish I

could tell you what is the matter with Clara. It is a mystery to the doctors themselves. Some of the mischief is due, in my humble opinion, to the manner in which she has been brought up."

"Ay, ay! A bad school, I suppose."

"Very bad, Capt. Holding; but not the sort of school which you have in your mind at this moment. Clara's early years were spent in a lonely old house in the Highlands of Scotland. The ignorant people about her were the people who did the mischief which I have just been speaking of. They filled her mind with the superstitions which are still respected as truths in the wild north, especially the superstition called the second-sight."

"God bless me!" cried the captain; "you don't mean to say she believes in such stuff as that? In these enlightened times too!"

Mrs. Crayford looked at her partner with a satirical smile.

"In these enlightened times, Capt. Holding, we only believe in dancing tables, and in messages sent from the other world by spirits who can't spell. By comparison with such supersti-

tions as these, even the second sight has something, in the shape of poetry, to recommend it, surely. Estimate for yourself," she continued seriously, "the effect of such surroundings as I have described, on a delicate, sensitive young creature, — a girl with a naturally imaginative temperament, leading a lonely, neglected life. Is it so very surprising that she should catch the infection of the superstition about her? And is it quite incomprehensible that her nervous system should suffer accordingly, at a very critical period of her life?"

"Not at all, Mrs. Crayford; not at all, ma'am, as you put it. Still it *is* a little startling to a commonplace man like me, to meet a young lady at a ball who believes in the second sight. Does she really profess to see into the future? Am I to understand that she positively falls into a trance, and sees people in distant countries, and foretells events to come? That is the second sight, is it not?"

"That is the second sight, captain; and that is really and positively what she does."

"The young lady who is dancing opposite to us?"

"The young lady who is dancing opposite to us."

The captain waited a little, letting the new flood of information, which had poured in on him, settle itself steadily in his mind. This process accomplished, the arctic explorer proceeded resolutely on his way to further discoveries.

"May I ask, ma'am, if you have ever seen her in a state of trance with your own eyes?" he inquired.

"My sister and I both saw her in the trance, little more than a month since," Mrs. Crayford replied. "She had been nervous and irritable all the morning; and we took her out into the garden to breathe the fresh air. Suddenly, without any reason for it, the color left her face. She stood between us, insensible to touch, insensible to sound; motionless as stone, and cold as death, in a moment. The first change we noticed came after a lapse of some minutes. Her hands began to move slowly, as if she was groping in the dark. Words dropped, one by one, from her lips, in a lost, vacant tone, as if she was talking in her sleep. Whether what she said referred to

past or future, I cannot tell you. She spoke of persons in a foreign country, — perfect strangers to my sister and to me. After a little interval, she suddenly became silent. A momentary color appeared in her face, and left it again. Her eyes closed, her feet failed her, and she sank insensible into our arms.”

“Sank insensible into your arms,” repeated the captain, absorbing his new information. “Most extraordinary! And, in this state of health, she goes out to parties, and dances. More extraordinary still!”

“You are entirely mistaken,” said Mrs. Crayford. “She is only here to-night to please me; and she is only dancing to please my husband. As a rule, she shuns all society. The doctor recommends change and amusement for her. She won’t listen to him. Except on rare occasions like this, she persists in remaining at home.”

Captain Holding brightened at the allusion to the doctor. Something practical might be got out of the doctor, — scientific man, — sure to see this very obscure subject under a new light. “How does it strike the doctor, now?” said the

captain. "Viewed simply as a case, ma'am, how does it strike the doctor?"

"He will give no positive opinion," Mrs. Crayford answered. "He told me that such cases as Clara's were by no means unfamiliar to medical practice. 'We know,' he told me, 'that certain disordered conditions of the brain and the nervous system produce results quite as extraordinary as any that you have described; and there our knowledge ends. Neither my science, nor any man's science, can clear up the mystery in this case. It is an especially difficult case to deal with, because Miss Burnham's early associations dispose her to attach a superstitious importance to the malady—the hysterical malady, as some doctors would call it—from which she suffers. I can give you instructions for preserving her general health; and I can recommend you to try some change in her life, provided you first relieve her mind of any secret anxieties that may possibly be preying on it.'"

The captain smiled self-approvingly. The doctor had justified his anticipations. The doctor had suggested a practical solution of the difficulty.

“Ay, ay! At last we have hit the nail on the head. Secret anxieties; yes, yes; plain enough now. A disappointment in love, — eh, Mrs. Crayford?”

“I don’t know, Capt. Holding: I am quite in the dark. Clara’s confidence in me—in other matters unbounded—is, in this matter of her (supposed) anxieties, a confidence still withheld. In all else we are like sisters. I sometimes fear there may indeed be some trouble preying secretly on her mind. I sometimes feel a little hurt at her incomprehensible silence.”

Capt. Holding was ready with his own practical remedy for this difficulty.

“Encouragement is all she wants, ma’am. Take my word for it, this matter rests entirely with you. It’s all in a nutshell. Encourage her to confide in you, and she *will* confide.”

“I am waiting to encourage her, captain, until she is left alone with me, after you have all sailed for the arctic seas. In the mean time, will you consider what I have said to you as intended for your ear only? And will you forgive me, if I own that the turn

the subject has taken does not tempt me to pursue it any further?"

The captain took the hint. He instantly changed the subject; choosing, on this occasion, safe professional topics. He spoke of ships that were ordered on foreign service; and, finding that these as subjects failed to interest Mrs. Crayford, he spoke next of ships that were ordered home again. This last experiment produced its effect, — an effect which the captain had not bargained for.

"Do you know," he began, "that 'The Atalanta' is expected back from the west coast of Africa every day? Have you any acquaintances among the officers of that ship?"

As it so happened, he put those questions to Mrs. Crayford while they were engaged in one of the figures of the dance which brought them within hearing of the opposite couple. At the same moment, — to the astonishment of her friends and admirers, — Miss Clara Burnham threw the quadrille into confusion by making a mistake! Everybody waited to see her set the mistake right. She made no attempt to

set it right: she turned deadly pale, and caught her partner by the arm.

"The heat!" she said faintly. "Take me away; take me into the air!"

Lieut. Crayford instantly led her out of the dance, and took her into the cool and empty conservatory, at the end of the room. As a matter of course, Capt. Holding and Mrs. Crayford left the quadrille at the same time. The captain saw his way to a joke.

"Is this the trance coming on?" he whispered. "If it is, as commander of the arctic expedition, I have a particular request to make. Will the second sight oblige me by seeing the shortest way to the north-west passage before we leave England?"

Mrs. Crayford declined to humor the joke. "If you will excuse my leaving you," she said quietly, "I will try and find out what is the matter with Miss Burnham."

At the entrance to the conservatory, Mrs. Crayford encountered her husband. The lieutenant was of middle age, tall and comely; a man with a winning simplicity and gentle-

ness in his manner, and an irresistible kindness in his brave blue eyes; in one word, a man whom everybody loved, including his wife.

“Don’t be alarmed,” said the lieutenant. “The heat has overcome her: that’s all.”

Mrs. Crayford shook her head, and looked at her husband half satirically, half fondly.

“You dear old innocent!” she exclaimed: “that excuse may do for you. For my part, I don’t believe a word of it. Go and get another partner, and leave Clara to me.”

She entered the conservatory, and seated herself by Clara’s side.

CHAPTER II.

“Now, my dear,” Mrs. Crayford began, “what does this mean?”

“Nothing.”

“That won’t do, Clara. Try again.”

“The heat of the room” —

“That won’t do, either. Say that you choose to keep your own secrets, and I shall understand what you mean.”

Clara’s sad, clear gray eyes looked up for the first time in Mrs. Crayford’s face, and suddenly became dimmed with tears.

“If I only dared tell you!” she murmured. “I hold so to your good opinion of me, Lucy; and I am so afraid of losing it!”

Mrs. Crayford’s manner changed. Her eyes rested gravely and anxiously on Clara’s face.

“You know, as well as I do, that nothing can

shake my affection for you," she said. "Do justice, my child, to your old friend. There is nobody here to listen to what we say. Open your heart, Clara. I see you are in trouble, and I want to comfort you."

Clara began to yield. In other words, she began to make conditions.

"Will you promise to keep what I tell you a secret from every living creature?" she began.

Mrs. Crayford met that question by putting a question on her side.

"Does 'every living creature' include my husband?"

"Your husband more than anybody! I love him, I revere him: he is so noble, he is so good! If I told him what I am going to tell you, he would despise me. Own it plainly, Lucy, if I am asking too much in asking you to keep a secret from your husband."

"Nonsense, child! When you are married, you will know that the easiest of all secrets to keep is a secret from your husband. I give you my promise. Now begin."

Clara hesitated painfully.

“ I don’t know how to begin ! ” she exclaimed, with a burst of despair. “ The words won’t come to me.”

“ Then I must help you. Do you feel ill to-night? Do you feel as you felt that day when you were with my sister and me in the garden ? ”

“ Oh, no ! ”

“ You are not ill, you are not really affected by the heat ; and yet you turn as pale as ashes, and you are obliged to leave the quadrille. There must be some reason for this.”

“ There *is* a reason. Capt. Holding ” —

“ Capt. Holding ! What, in the name of wonder, has the captain to do with it ? ”

“ He told you something about ‘ The Atalanta.’ He said ‘ The Atalanta ’ was expected back from Africa immediately.”

“ Well, and what of that ? Is there anybody in whom you are interested coming home in the ship ? ”

“ Somebody whom I am afraid of is coming home in the ship.”

Mrs. Crayford’s magnificent black eyes opened wide in amazement.

“My dear Clara! do you really mean what you say?”

“Wait a little, Lucy, and you shall judge for yourself. We must go back, if I am to make you understand me, to the year before we knew each other, to the last year of my father’s life. Did I ever tell you that my father moved southward, for the sake of his health, to a house in Kent that was lent to him by a friend?”

“No, my dear. I don’t remember ever hearing of the house in Kent. Tell me about it.”

“There is nothing to tell, except this. The new house was near a fine country-seat standing in its own park. The owner of the place was a gentleman named Wardour. He, too, was one of my father’s Kentish friends. He had an only son.”

She paused, and played nervously with her fan. Mrs. Crayford looked at her attentively. Clara’s eyes remained fixed on her fan. Clara said no more.

“What was the son’s name?” asked Mrs. Crayford quietly.

“Richard.”

“Am I right, Clara, in suspecting that Mr. Richard Wardour admired you?”

The question produced its intended effect. The question helped Clara to go on.

“I hardly knew, at first,” she said, “whether he admired me, or not. He was very strange in his ways, — headstrong, terribly headstrong, and passionate; but generous and affectionate, in spite of his faults of temper. Can you understand such a character?”

“Such characters exist by thousands. I have my faults of temper. I begin to like Richard already. Go on.”

“The days went by, Lucy, and the weeks went by. We were thrown very much together. I began, little by little, to have some suspicion of the truth.”

“And Richard helped to confirm your suspicions, of course?”

“No. He was not — unhappily for me — he was not that sort of man. He never spoke of the feeling with which he regarded me. It was I who saw it. I couldn’t help seeing it. I did all I could to show that I was willing to be a sis-

ter to him, and that I could never be any thing else. He did not understand me, or he would not: I can't say which."

" 'Would not,' is the most likely, my dear. Go on."

"It might have been as you say. There was a strange, rough bashfulness about him. He confused and puzzled me. He never spoke out. He seemed to treat me as if our future lives had been provided for while we were children. What could I do, Lucy?"

"Do? You could have asked your father to end the difficulty for you."

"Impossible! You forget what I have just told you. My father was suffering, at that time, under the illness which afterwards caused his death. He was quite unfit to interfere."

"Was there no one else who could help you?"

"No one."

"No lady in whom you could confide?"

"I had acquaintances among the ladies in the neighborhood. I had no friends."

"What did you do, then?"

"Nothing. I hesitated; I put off coming to

an explanation with him, unfortunately until it was too late."

"What do you mean by too late?"

"You shall hear. I ought to have told you that Richard Wardour is in the navy."

"Indeed! I am more interested in him than ever. Well?"

"One spring day Richard came to our house to take leave of us before he joined his ship. I thought he was gone, and I went into the next room. It was my own sitting-room, and it opened on to the garden."

"Yes?"

"Richard must have been watching me. He suddenly appeared in the garden. Without waiting for me to invite him, he walked into the room. I was a little startled, as well as surprised; but I managed to hide it. I said, 'What is it, Mr. Wardour?' He stepped close up to me. He said, in his quick, rough way, 'Clara! I am going to the African coast. If I live, I shall come back promoted; and we both know what will happen then.' He kissed me. I was half frightened, half angry. Before I could

compose myself to say a word, he was out in the garden again: he was gone. I ought to have spoken, I know. It was not honorable, not kind towards *him*. You can't reproach me for my want of courage and frankness more bitterly than I reproach myself."

"My dear child, I don't reproach you. I only think you might have written to him."

"I did write."

"Plainly?"

"Yes. I told him, in so many words, that he was deceiving himself, and that I could never marry him."

"Plain enough, in all conscience! Having said that, surely you are not to blame. What are you fretting about now?"

"Suppose my letter has never reached him?"

"Why should you suppose any thing of the sort?"

"What I wrote required an answer, Lucy, — *asked* for an answer. The answer has never come. What is the plain conclusion? My letter has never reached him. And 'The Atalanta' is expected back! Richard Wardour is return-

ing to England; Richard Wardour will claim me as his wife. You wondered just now if I really meant what I said. Do you doubt it still?"

Mrs. Crayford leaned back absently in her chair. For the first time since the conversation had begun, she let a question pass without making a reply. The truth is, Mrs. Crayford was thinking.

She saw Clara's position plainly; she understood the disturbing effect of it on the mind of a young girl. Still, making all allowances, she felt quite at a loss, so far, to account for Clara's excessive agitation. Her quick observing faculty had just detected that Clara's face showed no signs of relief, now that she had unburdened herself of her secret. There was something, clearly, under the surface here, — something of importance, that still remained to be discovered. A shrewd doubt crossed Mrs. Crayford's mind, and inspired the next words which she addressed to her young friend.

"My dear," she said abruptly, "have you told me all?"

Clara started, as if the question terrified her. Feeling sure that she now had the clew in her hand, Mrs. Crayford deliberately repeated her question, in another form of words. Instead of answering, Clara suddenly looked up. At the same moment a faint flush of color appeared in her face for the first time.

Looking up instinctively, on her side, Mrs. Crayford became aware of the presence, in the conservatory, of a young gentleman who was claiming Clara as his partner in the coming waltz. Mrs. Crayford fell into thinking once more. Had this young gentleman, she asked herself, any thing to do with the untold end of the story? Was *this* the true secret of Clara Burnham's terror at the impending return of Richard Wardour? Mrs. Crayford decided on putting her doubts to the test.

"A friend of yours, my dear?" she asked innocently. "Suppose you introduce us to each other."

Clara confusedly introduced the young gentleman, —

"Mr. Francis Aldersley, Lucy. Mr. Aldersley belongs to the arctic expedition."

"Attached to the expedition?" Mrs. Crayford repeated. "I am attached to the expedition, too, in my way. I had better introduce myself, Mr. Aldersley, as Clara seems to have forgotten to do it for me. I am Mrs. Crayford. My husband is Lieut. Crayford of 'The Wanderer.' Do you belong to that ship?"

"I have not the honor, Mrs. Crayford. I belong to 'The Sea-Mew.'"

Mrs. Crayford's superb eyes looked shrewdly backwards and forwards between Clara and Francis Aldersley, and saw the untold sequel to Clara's story. The young officer was a bright, handsome, gentlemanlike lad; just the person to seriously complicate the difficulty with Richard Wardour. There was no time for making any further inquiries. The band had begun the prelude to the waltz; and Francis Aldersley was waiting for his partner. With a word of apology to the young man, Mrs. Crayford drew Clara aside for a moment, and spoke to her in a whisper, —

"One word, my dear, before you return to the ball-room. It may sound conceited, after

the little you have told me ; but I think I understand your position *now* better than you do yourself. Do you want to hear my opinion ? ”

“ I am longing to hear it, Lucy. I want your opinion ; I want your advice.”

“ You shall have both, in the plainest and the fewest words. First, my opinion : you have no choice but to come to an explanation with Mr. Wardour as soon as he returns. Second, my advice : if you wish to make the explanation easy to both sides, take care that you make it in the character of a free woman.”

She laid a strong emphasis on the last three words, and looked pointedly at Francis Aldersley as she pronounced them. “ I won’t keep you from your partner any longer, Clara,” she resumed, and led the way back to the ball-room.

CHAPTER III.

THE burden on Clara's mind weighs on it more heavily than ever, after what Mrs. Crayford has said to her. She is too unhappy to feel the inspiriting influence of the dance. After a turn round the room, she complains of fatigue. Mr. Francis Aldersley looks at the conservatory (still as invitingly cool and empty as ever), leads her back to it, and places her on a seat among the shrubs. She tries — very feebly — to dismiss him.

“Don't let me keep you from dancing, Mr. Aldersley.”

He seats himself by her side, and feasts his eyes on the lovely, downcast face that dares not turn towards him. He whispers her, —

“Call me, ‘Frank.’”

She longs to call him “Frank:” she loves him with all her heart. But Mrs. Crayford's warning

words are still in her mind. She never opens her lips. Her lover moves a little closer, and asks another favor. Men are all alike on these occasions. Silence invariably encourages them to try again.

"Clara, have you forgotten what I said at the concert yesterday? May I say it again?"

"No."

"We sail to-morrow for the arctic seas. I may not return for years. Don't send me away without hope! Think of the long, lonely time in the dark north! Make it a happy time for *me*."

Though he speaks with the fervor of a man, he is little more than a lad: he is only twenty years old. And he is going to risk his young life on the frozen deep! Clara pities him as she never pitied any human creature before. He gently takes her hand. She tries to release it.

"What! not even that little favor on the last night?"

Her faithful heart takes his part, in spite of her. Her hand remains in his, and feels its soft,

persuasive pressure. She is a lost woman. It is only a question of time now.

“ Clara, do you love me ? ”

There is a pause. She shrinks from looking at him: she trembles with strange, contradictory sensations of pleasure and pain. His arm steals round her; he repeats his question in a whisper; his lips almost touch her little rosy ear as he says it again, —

“ Do you love me ? ”

She closes her eyes faintly. She hears nothing but those words, feels nothing but his arm round her; forgets Mrs. Crayford's warning, forgets Richard Wardour himself; turns suddenly, with a loving woman's desperate disregard of every thing but her love, nestles her head on his bosom, and answers him in that way, at last!

He lifts the beautiful, drooping head: their lips meet in their first kiss. They are both in heaven. It is Clara who brings them back to earth again with a start; it is Clara who says, “ Oh! what have I done ? ” — as usual, when it is too late.

Frank answers the question, —

“ You have made me happy, my angel. Now, when I come back, I come back to make you my wife.”

She shudders. She remembers Richard War-dour again at those words.

“ Mind ! ” she says, “ nobody is to know we are engaged till I permit you to mention it. Remember that ! ”

He promises to remember it. His arm tries to wind round her once more. No ! She is mistress of herself : she can positively dismiss him now — after she has let him kiss her.

“ Go ! ” she says. “ I want to see Mrs. Crayford. Find her. Say I am here, waiting to speak to her. Go at once, Frank, for my sake ! ”

There is no alternative but to obey her. His eyes drink a last draught of her beauty. He hurries away on his errand, the happiest man in the room. Five minutes since, she was only his partner in the dance. He has spoken ; and she has pledged herself to be his partner for life.

CHAPTER IV.

It was not easy to find Mrs. Crayford in the crowd. Searching here, and searching there, Frank became conscious of a stranger, who appeared to be looking for somebody, on his side. He was a dark, heavy-browed, strongly-built man, dressed in a shabby old naval officer's uniform. His manner — strikingly resolute and self-contained — was unmistakably the manner of a gentleman. He wound his way slowly through the crowd, stopping to look at every lady whom he passed, and then looking away again with a frown. Little by little he approached the conservatory, entered it after a moment's reflection, detected the glimmer of a white dress in the distance, through the shrubs and flowers, advanced to get a nearer view of the lady, and burst into Clara's presence with a cry of delight.

She sprang to her feet. She stood before him speechless, motionless, struck to stone. All her life was in her eyes, — the eyes which told her she was looking at Richard War-dour.

He was the first to speak.

“I am sorry I startled you, my darling. I forgot every thing but the happiness of seeing you again. We only reached our moorings two hours since. I was some time inquiring after you, and some time getting my ticket when they told me you were at the ball. Wish me joy, Clara! I am promoted. I have come back to make you my wife.”

A momentary change passed over the blank terror of her face. Her color rose faintly, her lips moved. She abruptly put a question to him.

“Did you get my letter?”

He started. “A letter from you? I never received it.”

The momentary animation died out of her face again. She drew back from him, and dropped into a chair. He advanced towards her, aston-

ished and alarmed. She shrank in the chair, — shrank, as if she was frightened of him.

“Clara, you have not even shaken hands with me. What does it mean?”

He paused, waiting, and watching her. She made no reply. A flash of the quick temper in him leaped up in his eyes. He repeated his last words, in loud and sterner tones, —

“What does it mean?”

She replied this time. His tone had hurt her; his tone had roused her sinking courage.

“It means, Mr. Wardour, that you have been mistaken from the first.”

“How have I been mistaken?”

“You have been under a wrong impression, and you have given me no opportunity of setting you right.”

“In what have I been wrong?”

“You have been too hasty and too confident about yourself and about me. You have entirely misunderstood me. I am grieved to distress you, but for your sake I must speak plainly. I am your friend always, Mr. Wardour. I can never be your wife.”

He mechanically repeated the last words. He seemed to doubt whether he had heard her aright.

“You can never be my wife?”

“Never!”

“Why?”

There was no answer. She was incapable of telling him a falsehood. She was ashamed to tell him the truth.

He stooped over her, and suddenly possessed himself of her hand. Holding her hand firmly, he stooped a little lower, searching for the signs which might answer him in her face. His own face darkened slowly while he looked. He was beginning to suspect her; and he acknowledged it in his next words:—

“Something has changed you towards me, Clara. Somebody has influenced you against me. Is it—you force me to ask the question—is it some other man?”

“You have no right to ask me that.”

He went on, without noticing what she had said to him,—

“Has that other man come between you and

me? I speak plainly, on my side. Speak plainly on yours."

"I *have* spoken. I have nothing more to say."

There was a pause. She saw the warning light which told of the fire within him, growing brighter and brighter in his eyes. She felt his grasp strengthening on her hand. He appealed to her for the last time.

"Reflect," he said, "reflect before it is too late. Your silence will not serve you. If you persist in not answering me, I shall take your silence as a confession. Do you hear me?"

"I hear you."

"Clara Burnham, I am not to be trifled with. Clara Burnham, I insist on the truth. Are you false to me?"

She resented that searching question with a woman's keen sense of the insult that is implied in doubting her to her face.

"Mr. Wardour, you forget yourself when you call me to account in that way. I never encouraged you. I never gave you promise or pledge" —

He passionately interrupted her before she could say more, —

“You have engaged yourself in my absence. Your words own it: your looks own it. You have engaged yourself to another man.”

“If I *have* engaged myself, what right have you to complain of it?” she answered firmly. “What right have you to control my actions?”

The next words died away on her lips. He suddenly dropped her hand. A marked change appeared in the expression of his eyes, — a change which told her of the terrible passions that she had let loose in him. She read, dimly read, something in his face which made her tremble, not for herself, but for Frank.

Little by little, the dark color faded out of his face. His deep voice dropped suddenly to a low and quiet tone as he spoke the parting words: —

“Say no more, Miss Burnham: you have said enough. I am answered; I am dismissed.” He paused, and, stepping close up to her, laid his hand on her arm.

“The time may come,” he said, “when I shall



“‘The time may come,’ he said, ‘when I shall forgive you. But the man who has robbed me of you, shall rue the day when you and he first met.’ He turned and left her.”— Page 45.

forgive *you*. But the man who has robbed me of you shall rue the day when you and he first met."

He turned, and left her.

A few minutes later Mrs. Crayford, entering the conservatory, was met by one of the attendants at the ball. The man stopped as if he wished to speak to her.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am. Do you happen to have a smelling-bottle about you? There is a young lady in the conservatory who is taken faint."

CHAPTER V.

THE morning of the next day, the morning on which the ships were to sail, came bright and breezy. Mrs. Crayford, having arranged to follow her husband to the water-side, and see the last of him before he embarked, entered Clara's room, on her way out of the house, anxious to hear how her young friend had passed the night. To her astonishment, she found Clara had risen, and was dressed, like herself, to go out.

"What does this mean, my dear? After what you suffered last night, after the shock of seeing that man, why don't you take my advice, and rest in your bed?"

"I can't rest. I have not slept all night. Have you been out yet?"

"No."

"Have you seen or heard any thing of Richard Wardour?"

“What an extraordinary question!”

“Answer my question. Don’t trifle with me.”

“Compose yourself, Clara. I have neither seen nor heard any thing of Richard Wardour. Take my word for it, he is far enough away by this time.”

“No, he is here: he is near us. All night long the presentiment has pursued me, — Frank and Richard Wardour will meet.”

“My dear child! what are you thinking of? They are total strangers to each other.”

“Something will happen to bring them together. I feel it: I know it. They will meet; there will be a mortal quarrel between them; and I shall be to blame. O Lucy! why didn’t I take your advice? Why was I mad enough to let Frank know that I loved him? Are you going to the landing-stage? I am all ready: I must go with you.”

“You must not think of it, Clara. There will be crowding and confusion at the water-side. You are not strong enough to bear it. Wait: I won’t be long away; wait until I come back.”

“I must and will go with you! Crowd?

He will be among the crowd. Confusion? In that confusion *he* will find his way to Frank. Don't ask me to wait. I shall go mad if I wait. I shall not know a moment's ease until I have seen Frank, with my own eyes, safe in the boat which takes him to his ship. You have got your bonnet on: what are we stopping here for? Come, or I shall go without you. Look at the clock! We have not a moment to lose."

It was useless to contend with her. Mrs. Crayford yielded. The two women left the house together.

The landing-stage, as Mrs. Crayford had predicted, was thronged with spectators. Not only the relatives and friends of the arctic voyagers, but strangers as well, had assembled in large numbers to see the ships sail. Clara's eyes wandered affrightedly hither and thither among the strange faces in the crowd; searching for the one face that she dreaded to see, and not finding it. So completely were her nerves unstrung, that she started, with a cry of alarm, on suddenly hearing Frank's voice behind her.

" 'The Sea-Mew's' boats are waiting," he said.

"I must go, darling. How pale you are looking, Clara! Are you ill?"

She never answered. She questioned him with wild eyes and trembling lips.

"Has any thing happened to you, Frank? — any thing out of the common?"

Frank laughed at the strange question.

"Any thing out of the common?" he repeated. "Nothing that I know of, except sailing for the arctic seas. That's out of the common, I suppose, isn't it?"

"Has anybody spoken to you since last night? Has any stranger followed you in the street?"

Frank turned in blank amazement to Mrs. Crayford.

"What on earth does she mean?"

Mrs. Crayford's lively invention supplied her with an answer, on the spur of the moment.

"Do you believe in dreams, Frank? Of course you don't. Clara has been dreaming about you; and Clara is foolish enough to believe in dreams. That's all: it's not worth talking about. Hark! they are calling you. Say good-by, or you will be too late for the boat."

Frank took Clara's hand. Long afterwards, in the dark arctic days, in the dreary arctic nights, he remembered how coldly and how passively that hand lay in his.

"Courage, Clara!" he said gayly. "A sailor's sweetheart must accustom herself to partings. The time will soon pass. Good-by, my darling! Good-by, my wife!"

He kissed the cold hand; he looked his last, for many a long year perhaps, at the pale and beautiful face. "How she loves me!" he thought. "How the parting distresses her!" He still held her hand: he would have lingered longer, if Mrs. Crayford had not wisely waived all ceremony, and pushed him away.

The two ladies followed him, at a safe distance, through the crowd, and saw him step into the boat. The oars struck the water: Frank waved his cap to Clara. In a moment more a vessel at anchor hid the boat from view. They had seen the last of him, on his way to the frozen deep.

"No Richard Wardour in the boat," said Mrs. Crayford: "no Richard Wardour on the shore.

Let this be a lesson to you, my dear. Never be foolish enough to believe in presentiments again."

Clara's eyes still wandered suspiciously to and fro among the crowd.

"Are you not satisfied yet?" asked Mrs. Crayford.

"No," Clara answered. "I am not satisfied yet."

"What! still looking for him? This is really too absurd. Here is my husband coming. I shall tell him to call a cab, and send you home."

Clara drew back a few steps.

"I won't be in the way, Lucy, while you are taking leave of your good husband," she said. "I will wait here."

"Wait here! What for?"

"For something which I may yet see, or for something which I may still hear."

"Richard Wardour?"

"Richard Wardour."

Mrs. Crayford turned to her husband without another word. Clara's infatuation was beyond the reach of remonstrance.

The boats of "The Wanderer" took the place at the landing-stage vacated by the boats of "The Sea-Mew." A burst of cheering among the outer ranks of the crowd announced the arrival of the commander of the expedition on the scene. Capt. Holding appeared, looking right and left for his first lieutenant. Finding Crayford with his wife, the captain made his apologies for interfering, with his best grace.

"Give him up to his professional duties for one minute, Mrs. Crayford, and you shall have him back again for half an hour. The arctic expedition is to blame, my dear lady, — not the captain, — for parting man and wife. In Crayford's place, I should have left it to the bachelors to find the north-west passage, and have stopped at home with you."

Excusing himself in those bluntly complimentary terms, Capt. Holding drew the lieutenant aside a few steps, accidentally taking a direction that led the two officers close to the place at which Clara was standing. Both the captain and the lieutenant were too completely absorbed in their professional business to notice

her. Neither the one nor the other had the faintest suspicion that she could and did hear every word of the talk that passed between them.

“You received my note this morning?” the captain began.

“Certainly, Capt. Helding, or I should have been on board the ship before this.”

“I am going on board myself at once,” the captain proceeded; “but I must ask you to keep your boat waiting for half an hour more. You will be all the longer with your wife, you know. I thought of that, Crayford.”

“I am much obliged to you, Capt. Helding. I suppose there is some other reason for inverting the customary order of things, and keeping the lieutenant on shore after the captain is on board.”

“Quite true! there *is* another reason. I want you to wait for a volunteer who has just joined us.”

“A volunteer?”

“Yes: he has his outfit to get in a hurry, and he may be half an hour late.”

"It's rather a sudden appointment, isn't it?"

"No doubt. Very sudden."

"And (pardon me) it's rather a long time, as we are situated, to keep the ships waiting for one man."

"Quite true, again. But a man who is worth having is worth waiting for. This man is worth having. This man is worth his weight in gold to such an expedition as ours; seasoned to all climates and all fatigues, a strong fellow, a brave fellow, a clever fellow, — in short, an excellent officer. I know him well, or I should never have taken him. The country gets plenty of work out of my new volunteer, Crayford. He only returned yesterday from foreign service."

"He only returned yesterday from foreign service! And he volunteers this morning to join the arctic expedition? You astonish me!"

"I dare say I do. You can't be more astonished than I was, when he presented himself at my hotel, and told me what he wanted. 'Why, my good fellow, you have just got home,' I said. 'Are you weary of your freedom, after

only a few hours' experience of it?' His answer rather startled me. He said, 'I am weary of my life, sir. I have come home, and found a trouble to welcome me, which goes near to break my heart. If I don't take refuge in absence and hard work, I am a lost man. Will you give me a refuge?' That's what he said, Crayford, word for word."

"Did you ask him to explain himself further?"

"Not I! I knew his value; and I took the poor devil on the spot, without pestering him with any more questions. No need to ask him to explain himself. The facts speak for themselves in these cases. The old story, my good friend: there's a woman at the bottom of it, of course."

Mrs. Crayford, waiting for the return of her husband as patiently as she could, was startled by feeling a hand suddenly laid on her shoulder. She looked round, and confronted Clara. Her first feeling of surprise changed instantly to alarm. Clara was trembling from head to foot.

"What is the matter? What has frightened you, my dear?"

"Lucy, I *have* heard of him!"

"Richard Wardour again?"

"Remember what I told you. I have heard every word of the conversation between Capt. Helling and your husband. A man came to the captain this morning, and volunteered to join 'The Wanderer.' The captain has taken him. The man is Richard Wardour."

"You don't mean it! Are you sure? Did you hear Capt. Helling mention his name?"

"No."

"Then how do you know it's Richard Wardour?"

"Don't ask me! I am as certain of it, as that I am standing here. They are going away together, Lucy, — away to the eternal ice and snow. My foreboding has come true. The two will meet, — the man who is to marry me, and the man whose heart I have broken."

"Your foreboding has *not* come true, Clara! The men have not met here: the men are not likely to meet elsewhere. They are appointed



"Mrs. Crayford snatched the list out of her husband's hand, and read the name
RICHARD WARDOUR."—Page 57.

to separate ships. Frank belongs to 'The Sea-Mew,' and Wardour to 'The Wanderer.' See! Capt. Holding has done. My husband is coming this way. Let me make sure. Let me speak to him."

Lieut. Crayford returned to his wife. She spoke to him instantly.

"William, you have got a new volunteer who joins the Wanderer?"

"What! you have been listening to the captain and me?"

"I want to know his name."

"How in the world did you manage to hear what we said to each other?"

"His name! has the captain given you his name?"

"Don't excite yourself, my dear. Look! you are positively alarming Miss Burnham. The new volunteer is a perfect stranger to us. There is his name, last on the ship's list."

Mrs. Crayford snatched the list out of her husband's hand, and read the name, —

“RICHARD WARDOUR.”

SECOND SCENE.

THE HUT OF "THE SEA-MEW."

CHAPTER VI.

GOOD-BY to England! Good-by to inhabited and civilized regions of the earth!

Two years have passed since the voyagers sailed from their native shores. The enterprise has failed; the arctic expedition is lost and ice-locked in the Polar wastes. The good ships "Wanderer" and "Sea-Mew," entombed in ice, will never ride the buoyant waters more. Stripped of their lighter timbers, both vessels have been used for the construction of huts erected on the nearest land.

The larger of the two buildings which now shelter the lost men is occupied by the surviving officers and crew of "The Sea-Mew." On one side of the principal room are the sleeping-berths

and the fireplace. The other side discloses a broad doorway (closed by a canvas screen), which serves as a means of communication with an inner apartment, devoted to the superior officers. A hammock is slung to the rough raftered roof of the main room, as an extra bed. A man, completely hidden by his bedclothes, is sleeping in the hammock. By the fireside there is a second man, supposed to be on the watch, fast asleep, poor wretch, at the present moment. Behind the sleeper stands an old cask, which serves for a table. The objects at present on the table are a pestle and mortar, and a saucepan full of the dry bones of animals, — in plain words, the dinner for the day. By way of ornament to the dull brown walls, icicles appear in the crevices of the timber, gleaming at intervals in the red firelight. No wind whistles outside the lonely dwelling; no cry of bird or beast is heard; in doors and out of doors the awful silence of the Polar desert reigns for the moment undisturbed.

CHAPTER VII.

THE first sound that broke the silence came from the inner apartment. An officer lifted the canvas screen in the hut of "The Sea-Mew," and entered the main room. Cold and privation had sadly thinned the ranks. The commander of the ship, Capt. Ebsworth, was dangerously ill. The first lieutenant was dead. An officer of "The Wanderer" filled their places for the time, with Capt. Holding's permission. The officer so employed was Lieut. Crayford.

He approached the man at the fireside, and awakened him.

"Jump up, Bateson! It's your turn to be relieved."

The relief appeared, rising from a heap of old sails at the back of the hut. Bateson vanished, yawning, to his bed. Lieut. Crayford walked backwards and forwards briskly, try-

ing what exercise would do towards warming his blood.

The pestle and mortar on the cask attracted his attention. He stopped, and looked up at the man in the hammock.

"I must rouse the cook," he said to himself with a smile. "That fellow little thinks how useful he is in keeping up my spirits, — the most inveterate croaker and grumbler in the world; and yet, according to his own account, the only cheerful man in the whole ship's company. John Want! John Want! Rouse up, there!"

A head rose slowly out of the bedclothes, covered with a red nightcap. A melancholy nose rested itself on the edge of the hammock. A voice, worthy of the nose, expressed its opinion of the arctic climate in these words: —

"Lord, Lord! Here's all my breath on my blanket; icicles, if you please, sir, all round my mouth, and all over my blanket. Every time I have snored, I have frozen something. When a man gets the cold into him to that extent, that he ices his own bed, it can't last much longer. Never mind! *I don't grumble.*"

Crayford tapped the saucepan of bones impatiently. John Want lowered himself to the floor, grumbling all the way, by a rope attached to the rafters at his bed-head. Instead of approaching his superior officer and his saucepan, he hobbled, shivering, to the fireplace, and held his chin as close as he possibly could over the fire. Crayford looked after him.

“Halloo! what are you doing there?”

“Thawing my beard, sir.”

“Come here directly, and set to work on these bones.”

John Want remained immovably attached to the fireplace, holding something else over the fire. Crayford began to lose his temper.

“What the devil are you about now?”

“Thawing my watch, sir. It’s been under my pillow all night, and the cold has stopped it. Cheerful, wholesome, bracing sort of climate to live in; isn’t it, sir? Never mind! *I* don’t grumble.”

“No, we all know that. Look here! Are these bones pounded small enough?”

John Want suddenly approached the lieu-

tenant, and looked at him with an appearance of the deepest interest.

"You'll excuse me, sir," he said: "how very hollow your voice sounds this morning!"

"Never mind my voice. The bones, the bones!"

"Yes, sir, the bones. They'll take a trifle more pounding. I'll do my best with them, sir, for your sake."

"What do you mean?"

John Want shook his head, and looked at Crayford with a dreary smile.

"I don't think I shall have the honor of making much more bone-soup for you, sir. Do you think, yourself, you'll last long, sir? I don't, saving your presence. I think about another week or ten days will do for us all. Never mind! I don't grumble."

He poured the bones into the mortar, and began to pound them—under protest. At the same moment a sailor appeared, entering from the inner hut.

"A message from Capt. Ebsworth, sir."

"Well?"

"The captain is worse than ever with his freezing-pains, sir. He wants to see you immediately."

"I will go at once. Rouse the doctor."

Answering in those terms, Crayford returned to the inner hut, followed by the sailor. John Want shook his head again, and smiled more drearily than ever.

"Rouse the doctor?" he repeated. "Suppose the doctor should be frozen? He hadn't a ha'porth of warmth in him last night, and his voice sounded like a whisper in a speaking-trumpet. Will the bones do now? Yes, the bones will do now. Into the saucepan with you," cried John Want, suiting the action to the word, "and flavor the hot water, if you can! When I remember that I was once an apprentice at a pastrycook's; when I think of the gallons of turtle-soup that this hand has stirred up in a jolly hot kitchen; and when I find myself mixing bones and hot water for soup, and turning into ice as fast as I can, —if I wasn't of a cheerful disposition, I should feel inclined to grumble. John Want, John Want! what

ever had you done with your natural senses, when you made up your mind to go to sea?"

A new voice hailed the cook, speaking from one of the bedplaces in the side of the hut. It was the voice of Francis Aldersley.

"Who's that croaking over the fire?"

"Croaking?" repeated John Want, with the air of a man who considered himself the object of a gratuitous insult. "Croaking? You don't find your own voice at all altered for the worse; do you, Mr. Frank? I don't give *him*," John proceeded, speaking confidentially to himself, "more than six hours to last. He's one of your grumblers."

"What are you doing there?" asked Frank.

"I'm making bone-soup, sir, and wondering why I ever went to sea."

"Well, and why did you go to sea?"

"I'm not certain, Mr. Frank. Sometimes I think it was natural perversity; sometimes I think it was false pride at getting over sea-sickness; sometimes I think it was reading 'Robinson Crusoe,' and books warning of me *not* to go to sea."

Frank laughed. "You're an odd fellow. What do you mean by false pride at getting over sea-sickness? Did you get over sea-sickness in some new way?"

John Want's dismal face brightened in spite of himself. Frank had recalled to the cook's memory one of the noteworthy passages in the cook's life.

"That's it, sir!" he said. "If ever a man cured sea-sickness in a new way yet, I am that man. I got over it, Mr. Frank, by dint of hard eating. I was a passenger on board a packet-boat, sir, when first I saw blue water. A nasty lopp of a sea came on at dinner-time; and I began to feel queer the moment the soup was put on the table. 'Sick?' says the captain. 'Rather, sir,' says I. 'Will you try my cure?' says the captain. 'Certainly, sir,' says I. 'Is your heart in your mouth yet?' says the captain. 'Not quite, sir,' says I. 'Mock-turtle soup,' says the captain, and helps me. I swallow a couple of spoonfuls, and turn as white as a sheet. The captain cocks his eye at me. 'Go on deck, sir,' says he; 'get rid of the soup,

and then come back to the cabin.' I got rid of the soup, and came back to the cabin. 'Cod's head-and-shoulders,' says the captain, and helps me. 'I can't stand it, sir,' says I. 'You must,' says the captain, 'because it's the cure.' I crammed down a mouthful, and turned paler than ever. 'Go on deck,' says the captain; 'get rid of the cod's head, and come back to the cabin.' Off I go, and back I come. 'Boiled leg of mutton and trimmings,' says the captain, and helps me. 'No fat, sir,' says I. 'Fat's the cure,' says the captain, and makes me eat it. 'Lean's the cure,' says the captain, and makes me eat it. 'Steady?' says the captain. 'Sick,' says I. 'Go on deck,' says the captain; 'get rid of the boiled leg of mutton and trimmings, and come back to the cabin.' Off I go, staggering: back I come, more dead than alive. 'Devilled kidneys,' says the captain. I shut my eyes, and got 'em down. 'Cure's beginning,' says the captain; 'mutton-chop and pickles.' I shut my eyes, and got *them* down. 'Broiled ham and cayenne pepper,' says the captain; 'glass of stout, and cranberry-tart.

Want to go on deck again?' — 'No, sir,' says I. 'Cure's done,' says the captain. 'Never you give in to your stomach, and your stomach will end in giving in to *you*.' "

Having stated the moral purpose of his story in these unanswerable words, John Want took himself and his saucepan into the kitchen. A moment later Crayford returned to the hut, and astonished Frank Aldersley by an unexpected question.

"Have you any thing in your berth, Frank, that you set a value on?"

Frank looked puzzled.

"Nothing that I set the smallest value on, when I am out of it," he replied. "What does your question mean?"

"We are almost as short of fuel as we are of provisions," Crayford proceeded. "Your berth will make good firing. I have directed Bateson to be here in ten minutes with his axe."

"Very attentive and considerate on your part," said Frank. "What is to become of me, if you please, when Bateson has chopped my bed into firewood?"

"Can't you guess?"

"I suppose the cold has stupefied me. The riddle is beyond my reading. Suppose you give me a hint."

"Certainly. There will be beds to spare soon: there is to be a change, at last, in our wretched lives here. Do you see it now?"

Frank's eyes sparkled. He sprang out of his berth, and waved his fur cap in triumph.

"See it?" he exclaimed: "of course I do! The exploring party is to start at last. Do I go with the expedition?"

"It is not very long since you were in the doctor's hands, Frank," said Crayford kindly. "I doubt if you are strong enough yet to make one of the exploring party."

"Strong enough, or not," returned Frank, "any risk is better than pining and perishing here. Put me down, Crayford, among those who volunteer to go."

"Volunteers will not be accepted in this case," said Crayford. "Capt. Holding and Capt. Ebsworth see serious objections, as we are situated, to that method of proceeding."

"Do they mean to keep the appointments in their own hands?" asked Frank. "I, for one, object to that."

"Wait a little," said Crayford. "You were playing backgammon, the other day, with one of the officers. Does the board belong to him, or to you?"

"It belongs to me. I have got it in my locker here. What do you want with it?"

"I want the dice and the box, for casting lots. The captains have arranged, most wisely as I think, that chance shall decide among us, who goes with the expedition, and who stays behind in the huts. The officers and crew of 'The Wanderer' will be here in a few minutes to cast the lots. Neither you, nor any one, can object to that way of deciding among us. Officers and men alike take their chance together. Nobody can grumble."

"I am quite satisfied," said Frank. "But I know of one man among the officers who is sure to make objections."

"Who is the man?"

"You know him well enough too, — the 'Bear of the Expedition,' Richard Wardour."

“Frank, Frank! you have a bad habit of letting your tongue run away with you. Don’t repeat that stupid nickname when you talk of my good friend Richard Wardour.”

“Your good friend? Crayford, your liking for that man amazes me.”

Crayford laid his hand kindly on Frank’s shoulder. Of all the officers of “The Sea-Mew,” Crayford’s favorite was Frank.

“Why should it amaze you?” he asked. “What opportunities have *you* had of judging? You and Wardour have always belonged to different ships. I have never seen you in Wardour’s society for five minutes together. How can *you* form a fair estimate of his character?”

“I take the general estimate of his character,” Frank answered. “He has got his nickname because he is the most unpopular man in his ship. Nobody likes him: there must be some reason for that.”

“There is only one reason for it,” Crayford rejoined. “Nobody understands Richard Wardour. I am not talking at random. Remember, I sailed from England with him in ‘The

Wanderer;’ and I was only transferred to ‘The Sea-Mew’ long after we were locked up in the ice. I was Richard Wardour’s companion on board ship for months; and I learnt there to do him justice. Under all his outward defects, I tell you there beats a great and generous heart. Suspend your opinion, my lad, until you know my friend as well as I do. No more of this now. Give me the dice and the box.”

Frank opened his locker. At the same moment the silence of the snowy waste outside was broken by a shouting of voices hailing the hut, “ ‘Sea-Mew,’ ahoy!”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE sailor on watch opened the outer door. There, plodding over the ghastly white snow, were the officers of "The Wanderer" approaching the hut. There, scattered under the merciless black sky, were the crew, with the dogs and the sledges, waiting the word which was to start them on their perilous and doubtful journey.

Capt. Holding of "The Wanderer," accompanied by his officers, entered the hut, in high spirits at the prospect of a change. Behind them, lounging in slowly by himself, was a dark, sullen, heavy-browed man. He neither spoke, nor offered his hand, to anybody: he was the one person present who seemed to be perfectly indifferent to the fate in store for him. This was the man whom his brother officers had nicknamed the Bear of the Expedition, — in other words, Richard Wardour.

Crayford advanced to welcome Capt. Holding. Frank, remembering the friendly reproof which he had just received, passed over the other officers of "The Wanderer," and made a special effort to be civil to Crayford's friend.

"Good morning, Mr. Wardour," he said. "We may congratulate each other on the chance of leaving this horrible place."

"*You* may think it horrible," Wardour retorted. "I like it."

"Like it? Good heavens! Why?"

"Because there are no women here."

Frank turned to his brother officers, without making any further advances in the direction of Richard Wardour. The Bear of the Expedition was more unapproachable than ever.

In the mean time the hut had become thronged by the able-bodied officers and men of the two ships. Capt. Holding, standing in the midst of them, with Crayford by his side, proceeded to explain the purpose of the contemplated expedition to the audience which surrounded him.

He began in these words:—

“Brother officers and men of the ‘Wanderer’ and ‘Sea-Mew,’ it is my duty to tell you, very briefly, the reasons which have decided Capt. Ebsworth and myself on despatching an exploring party in search of help. Without recalling all the hardships we have suffered for the last two years, — the destruction, first of one of our ships, then of the other; the death of some of our bravest and best companions; the vain battles we have been fighting with the ice and snow, and boundless desolation, of these inhospitable regions, — without dwelling on these things, it is my duty to remind you that this, the last place in which we have taken refuge, is far beyond the track of any previous expedition; and that, consequently, our chance of being discovered by any rescuing parties that may be sent to look after us is, to say the least of it, a chance of the most uncertain kind. You all agree with me, gentlemen, so far?”

The officers (with the exception of Wardour, who stood apart in sullen silence) all agreed so far.

The captain went on, —

"It is, therefore, urgently necessary that we should make another, and probably a last, effort to extricate ourselves. The winter is not far off; game is getting scarcer and scarcer; our stock of provisions is running low; and the sick — especially, I am sorry to say, the sick in 'The Wanderer's' hut — are increasing in number day by day. We must look to our own lives, and to the lives of those who are dependent on us; and we have no time to lose."

The officers echoed the words cheerfully, —

"Right, right! No time to lose."

Capt. Holding resumed, —

"The plan proposed is, that a detachment of the able-bodied officers and men among us should set forth this very day, — and make another effort to reach the nearest inhabited settlements, from which help and provisions may be despatched to those who remain here. The new direction to be taken, and the various precautions to be adopted, are all drawn out ready. The only question now before us is, Who is to stop here? and who is to undertake the journey?"

The officers answered the question with one accord, "Volunteers!"

The men echoed their officers, "Ay, ay, volunteers!"

Wardour still preserved his sullen silence. Crayford noticed him, standing apart from the rest, and appealed to him personally.

"Do you say nothing?" he asked.

"Nothing," Wardour answered. "Go or stay, it's all one to me."

"I hope you don't really mean that," said Crayford.

"I do."

"I am sorry to hear it, Wardour."

Capt. Holding answered the general suggestion in favor of volunteering by a question which instantly checked the rising enthusiasm of the meeting.

"Well," he said, "suppose we say, Volunteers. Who volunteers to stop in the huts?"

There was a dead silence. The officers and men looked at each other confusedly. The captain continued, —

"You see, we can't settle it by volunteering.

You all want to go. Every man among us, who has the use of his limbs, naturally wants to go. But what is to become of those who have *not* got the use of their limbs? Some of us must stay here, and take care of the sick."

Everybody admitted that this was true.

"So we get back again," said the captain, "to the old question, Who among the able-bodied is to go? and who is to stay? Capt. Ebsworth says, and I say, let chance decide it. Here are dice. The numbers run as high as twelve, — double sixes. All who throw under six stay: all who throw over six go. Officers of 'The Wanderer' and The 'Sea-Mew,' do you agree to that way of meeting the difficulty?"

All the officers agreed, with the one exception of Wardour, who still kept silence.

"Men of 'The Wanderer' and 'The Sea-Mew,' your officers agree to cast lots. Do you agree too?"

The men agreed without a dissentient voice. Crayford handed the box and the dice to Capt. Holding.

"You throw first, sir. Under six, stay. Over six, go."

Capt Holding cast the dice ; the top of the cask serving for a table. He threw seven.

“Go,” said Crayford. “I congratulate you, sir. Now for my own chance.” He cast the dice in his turn. Three. “Stay! Ah, well! well! if I can do my duty, and be of use to others, what does it matter whether I go or stay? Wardour, you are next, in the absence of your first lieutenant.”

Wardour prepared to cast, without shaking the dice.

“Shake the box, man!” cried Crayford. “Give yourself a chance of luck.”

Wardour persisted in letting the dice fall out carelessly, just as they lay in the box.

“Not I!” he muttered to himself. “I’ve done with luck.” Saying these words, he threw down the empty box, and seated himself on the nearest chest, without looking to see how the dice had fallen.

Crayford examined them. “Six!” he exclaimed. “There! you have a second chance, in spite of yourself. You are neither under nor over: you throw again.”

"Bah!" growled the Bear. "It's not worth the trouble of getting up for. Somebody else throw for me." He suddenly looked at Frank. "You! you have got what the women call a lucky face."

Frank appealed to Crayford. "Shall I?"

"Yes, if he wishes it," said Crayford.

Frank cast the dice. "Two! He stays. Wardour, I am sorry I have thrown against you."

"Go or stay," reiterated Wardour, "it's all one to me. You will be luckier, young one, when you cast for yourself."

Frank cast for himself.

"Eight! Hurrah! I go!"

"What did I tell you?" said Wardour. "The chance was yours. You have thriven on my ill luck."

He rose, as he spoke, to leave the hut. Crayford stopped him.

"Have you any thing particular to do, Richard?"

"What has anybody to do here?"

"Wait a little, then. I want to speak to you when this business is over."

“Are you going to give me any more good advice?”

“Don’t look at me in that sour way, Richard. I am going to ask you a question about some thing which concerns yourself.”

Wardour yielded without a word more. He returned to his chest, and cynically composed himself to slumber. The casting of the lots went on rapidly among the officers and men. In another half-hour, chance had decided the question of “go,” or “stay,” for all alike. The men left the hut. The officers entered the inner apartment for a last conference with the bedridden captain of “The Sea-Mew.” Wardour and Crayford were left together, alone.

CHAPTER IX.

CRAYFORD touched his friend on the shoulder to rouse him. Wardour looked up impatiently, with a frown.

"I was just asleep," he said. "Why do you wake me?"

"Look round you, Richard. We are alone."

"Well, and what of that?"

"I wish to speak to you privately; and this is my opportunity. You have disappointed and surprised me to-day. Why did you say it was all one to you whether you went or staid? Why are you the only man among us who seems to be perfectly indifferent whether we are rescued or not?"

"Can a man always give a reason for what is strange in his manner or his words?" Wardour retorted.

"He can try," said Crayford quietly, "when his friend asks him."

Wardour's manner softened.

"That's true," he said. "I *will* try. Do you remember the first night at sea, when we sailed from England in 'The Wanderer?'"

"As well as if it was yesterday."

"A calm, still night," the other went on thoughtfully. "No clouds, no stars, nothing in the sky but the broad moon; and hardly a ripple to break the path of light she made in the quiet water. Mine was the middle watch that night. You came on deck, and found me alone" —

He stopped. Crayford took his hand, and finished the sentence for him.

"Alone, and in tears."

"The last I shall ever shed," Wardour added bitterly.

"Don't say that. There are times when a man is to be pitied indeed, if he can shed no tears. Go on, Richard."

Wardour proceeded, still following the old recollections, still preserving his gentler tones.

"I should have quarrelled with any other man who had surprised me at that moment," he

said. "There was something, I suppose, in your voice, when you asked my pardon for disturbing me, that softened my heart. I told you I had met with a disappointment which had broken me for life. There was no need to explain further. The only hopeless wretchedness in this world is the wretchedness that women cause."

"And the only unalloyed happiness," said Crayford, "the happiness that women bring."

"That may be your experience of them," Wardour answered. "Mine is different. All the devotion, the patience, the humility, the worship, that there is in man, I laid at the feet of a woman. She accepted the offering as women do; accepted it easily, gracefully, unfeelingly; accepted it as a matter of course. I left England to win a high place in my profession, before I dared to win *her*. I braved danger, and faced death. I staked my life in the fever-swamps of Africa, to gain the promotion that I only desired for her sake; and gained it. I came back to give her all, and to ask nothing in return, but to rest my weary heart in the

sunshine of her smile. And her own lips—the lips I had kissed at parting—told me that another man had robbed me of her. I spoke but few words when I heard that confession, and left her forever. ‘The time may come,’ I told her, ‘when I shall forgive *you*; but the man who has robbed me of you shall rue the day when you and he first met.’ Don’t ask me who he was. I have yet to discover him. The treachery had been kept secret; nobody could tell me where to find him; nobody could tell me who he was. What did it matter? When I had lived out the first agony, I could rely on myself: I could be patient, and bide my time.”

“Your time? What time?”

“The time when I and that man shall meet face to face. I knew it then, I know it now; it was written on my heart then, it is written on my heart now,—we two shall meet and know each other! With that conviction strong within me, I volunteered for this service, as I would have volunteered for any thing that set work and hardship and danger, like ramparts, be-

tween my misery and me. With that conviction strong within me still, I tell you it is no matter whether I stay here with the sick, or go hence with the strong. I shall live till I have met that man! There is a day of reckoning appointed between us. Here in the freezing cold, or away in the deadly heat; in battle, or in shipwreck; in the face of starvation, under the shadow of pestilence, — I, though hundreds are falling round me, I shall live, — live for the coming of one day, live for the meeting with one man!”

He stopped, trembling, body and soul, under the hold that his own terrible superstition had fastened on him. Crayford drew back in silent horror. Wardour noticed the action; he resented it; he appealed, in defence of his one cherished conviction, to Crayford's own experience of him.

“Look at me!” he cried. “Look how I have lived and thriven, with the heartache gnawing at me at home, and the winds of the icy north whistling round me here! I am the strongest man among you. Why? I have

fought through hardships that have laid the best-seasoned men of all our party on their backs. Why? What have *I* done, that my life should throb as bravely through every vein in my body at this minute, and in this deadly place, as ever it did in the wholesome breezes of home? What am I preserved for? I tell you again, for the coming of one day; for the meeting with one man."

He paused once more. This time Crayford spoke.

"Richard," he said, "since we first met, I have believed in your better nature, against all outward appearance. I have believed in you firmly, truly, as your brother might. You are putting that belief to a hard test. If your enemy had told me that you had ever talked as you talk now, that you had ever looked as you look now, I would have turned my back on him as the utterer of a vile calumny against a just, a brave, an upright man. O my friend, my friend! if ever I have deserved well of you, put away these thoughts from your heart. Face me again with the stainless look of a man who

has trampled under his feet the bloody superstitions of revenge, and knows them no more. Never, never, let the time come when I cannot offer you my hand, as I offer it now, to the man I can still admire, to the brother I can still love ! ”

The heart that no other voice could touch felt that appeal. The fierce eyes, the hard voice, softened under Crayford's influence. Richard Wardour's head sank on his breast.

“ You are kinder to me than I deserve,” he said. “ Be kinder still, and forget what I have been talking about. No ! no more about me : I am not worth it. We'll change the subject, and never go back to it again. Let's do something. Work, Crayford, — that's the true elixir of *our* life ; work that stretches the muscles, and sets the blood a-glowing ; work that tires the body, and rests the mind. Is there nothing in hand that I can do ? — nothing to cut, nothing to carry ? ”

The door opened as he put the question. Bateson, appointed to chop Frank's bedplace into firing, appeared punctually with his axe.

Wardour, without a word of warning, snatched the axe out of the man's hand.

"What was this wanted for?" he asked.

"To cut up Mr. Aldersley's berth, there, into firing, sir."

"I'll do it for you. I'll have it down in no time!" He turned to Crayford. "You needn't be afraid about me, old friend. I am going to do the right thing. I am going to tire my body, and rest my mind."

The evil spirit in him was plainly subdued, for the time at least. Crayford took his hand in silence, and then (followed by Bateson) left him to his work.

CHAPTER X.

AXE in hand, Wardour approached Frank's bedplace.

"If I could only cut the thoughts out of me," he said to himself, "as I am going to cut the billets out of this wood!" He attacked the bedplace with the axe, like a man who well knew the use of his instrument. "Oh, me!" he thought sadly: "if I had only been born a carpenter instead of a gentleman! A good axe, Master Bateson: I wonder where you got it. Something like a grip, my man, on this handle. Poor Crayford! his words stick in my throat. A fine fellow, a noble fellow! No use thinking, no use regretting: what is said *is* said. Work, work, work!"

Plank after plank fell out on the floor. He laughed over the easy task of destruction. "Aha, young Aldersley! It doesn't take much

to demolish your bedplace. I'll have it down. I would have the whole hut down, if they would only give me the chance of chopping at it."

A long strip of wood fell to his axe, — long enough to require cutting in two. He turned it, and stooped over it. Something caught his eye, — letters carved in the wood. He looked closer. The letters were very faintly and badly cut. He could only make out the first three of them; and even of those he was not quite certain. They looked like C L A, if they looked like any thing. He threw down the strip of wood irritably.

"Damn the fellow (whoever he is) who cut this! Why should he carve *that* name, of all the names in the world?"

He paused, considering; then determined to go on again with his self-imposed labor. He was ashamed of his own outburst. He looked eagerly for the axe. "Work, work! Nothing for it but work." He found the axe, and went on again.

He cut out another plank.

He stopped, and looked at it suspiciously.

There was carving, again, on this plank. The letters F. and A. appeared on it.

He put down the axe. There were vague misgivings in him which he was not able to realize. The state of his own mind was fast becoming a puzzle to him.

"More carving," he said to himself. "That's the way these young idlers employ their long hours. F. A., — those must be *his* initials: Frank Aldersley. Who carved the letters on the other plank? Frank Aldersley too?"

He turned the piece of wood in his hand nearer to the light, and looked lower down it. More carving again, lower down! Under the initials F. A. were two more letters: C. B.

"C. B.?" he repeated to himself. "His sweetheart's initials, I suppose. Of course, at his age, his sweetheart's initials."

He paused once more. A spasm of inner pain showed the shadow of its mysterious passage outwardly on his face.

"*Her* cypher is C. B.," he said, in low, broken tones. "C. B., Clara Burnham."

He waited, with the plank in his hand; repeat-

ing the name over and over again, as if it was a question he was putting to himself.

“Clara Burnham? Clara Burnham?”

He dropped the plank, and turned deadly pale in a moment. His eyes wandered furtively backwards and forwards between the strip of wood on the floor, and the half-demolished berth. “O God! what has come to me now?” he said to himself in a whisper. He snatched up the axe with a strange cry, something between rage and terror. He tried, fiercely, desperately tried, to go on with his work. No! strong as he was, he could not use the axe. His hands were helpless: they trembled incessantly. He went to the fire; he held his hands over it. They still trembled incessantly; they infected the rest of him. He shuddered all over. He knew fear. His own thoughts terrified him.

“Crayford!” he cried out; “Crayford! come here, and let’s go hunting.”

No friendly voice answered him. No friendly face showed itself at the door.

An interval passed; and there came over him another change. He recovered his self-posses-

sion almost as suddenly as he had lost it. A smile — a horrid, deforming, unnatural smile — spread slowly, stealthily, devilishly over his face. He left the fire; he put the axe away softly in a corner; he sat down in his old place, deliberately self-abandoned to a frenzy of vindictive joy. He had found the man! There, at the end of the world; there, at the last fight of the arctic voyagers against starvation and death, — he had found the man!

The minutes passed.

He became conscious, on a sudden, of a freezing stream of air pouring into the room.

He turned, and saw Crayford opening the door of the hut. A man was behind him. Wardour rose eagerly, and looked over Crayford's shoulder.

Was it, could it be, the man who had carved the letters on the plank? Yes; Frank Aldersley!

CHAPTER XI.

“STILL at work!” Crayford exclaimed, looking at the half-demolished bedplace. “Give yourself a little rest, Richard. The exploring party is ready to start. If you wish to take leave of your brother officers before they go, you have no time to lose.”

He checked himself there, looking Wardour full in the face.

“Good heavens!” he cried: “how pale you are! Has any thing happened?”

Frank, searching in his locker for articles of clothing which he might require on the journey, looked round. He was startled, as Crayford had been startled, by the sudden change in Wardour since they had last seen him.

“Are you ill?” he asked. “I hear you have been doing Bateson’s work for him. Have you hurt yourself?”

Wardour suddenly moved his head, so as to hide his face from both Crayford and Frank. He took out his handkerchief, and wound it clumsily round his left hand.

"Yes," he said. "I hurt myself with the axe. It's nothing. Never mind. Pain always has a curious effect on me. I tell you it's nothing: don't notice it."

He turned his face towards them again, as suddenly as he had turned it away. He advanced a few steps, and addressed himself, with an uneasy familiarity, to Frank.

"I didn't answer you civilly when you spoke to me some little time since; I mean, when I first came in here, along with the rest of them. I apologize. Shake hands! How are you? Ready for the march?"

Frank met the oddly abrupt advance which had been made to him with perfect good humor.

"I am glad to be friends with you, Mr. Wardour. I wish I was as well seasoned to fatigue as you are."

Wardour burst into a hard, joyous, unnatural laugh.

“Not strong, eh? You don’t look it. The dice had better have sent me away, and kept you here. I never felt in better condition in my life.” He paused, and added, with his eye on Frank, and with a strong emphasis on the words, “We men of Kent are made of tough material.”

Frank advanced a step, on his side, with a new interest in Richard Wardour.

“You come from Kent?” he said.

“Yes: from East Kent.” He waited a little once more, and looked hard at Frank. “Do you know that part of the country?” he asked.

“I ought to know something about East Kent,” Frank answered. “Some dear friends of mine once lived there.”

“Friends of yours?” Wardour repeated. “One of the county families, I suppose?”

As he put the question, he abruptly looked over his shoulder. He was standing between Crayford and Frank. Crayford, taking no part in the conversation, had been watching him, and listening to him more and more attentively, as

that conversation went on. Within the last moment or two Wardour had become instinctively conscious of this. He resented Crayford's conduct with needless irritability.

"Why are you staring at me?" he asked.

"Why are you looking unlike yourself?" Crayford answered quietly.

Wardour made no reply. He renewed the conversation with Frank.

"One of the county families?" he resumed. "The Witherbys of Yew Grange, I dare say?"

"No," said Frank; "but friends of the Witherbys, very likely. The Burnhams."

Desperately as he struggled to maintain it, Wardour's self-control failed him. He started violently. The clumsily-wound handkerchief fell off his hand. Still looking at him attentively, Crayford picked it up.

"There is your handkerchief, Richard," he said. "Strange!"

"What is strange?"

"You told us you had hurt yourself with the axe" —

"Well?"

"There is no blood on your handkerchief."

Wardour snatched the handkerchief out of Crayford's hand, and, turning away, approached the outer door of the hut. "No blood on the handkerchief," he said to himself. "There may be a stain or two, when Crayford sees it again." He stopped within a few paces of the door, and spoke to Crayford. "You recommended me to take leave of my brother officers before it was too late," he said. "I am going to follow your advice."

The door was opened from the outer side, as he laid his hand on the lock.

One of the quartermasters of "The Wanderer" entered the hut.

"Is Capt. Helding here, sir?" he asked, addressing himself to Wardour.

Wardour pointed to Crayford.

"The lieutenant will tell you," he said.

Crayford advanced, and questioned the quartermaster.

"What do you want with Capt. Helding?" he asked.

"I have a report to make, sir. There has been an accident on the ice."

“To one of your men?”

“No, sir. To one of our officers.”

Wardour — on the point of going out — paused when the quartermaster made that reply. For a moment he considered with himself. Then he walked slowly back to the part of the room in which Frank was standing. Crayford, directing the quartermaster, pointed to the arched doorway in the side of the hut.

“I am sorry to hear of the accident,” he said. “You will find Capt. Holding in that room.”

For the second time, with singular persistency, Wardour renewed the conversation with Frank.

“So you knew the Burnhams,” he said. “What became of Clara when her father died?”

Frank’s face flushed angrily, on the instant.

“Clara!” he repeated. “What authorizes you to speak of Miss Burnham in that familiar manner?”

Wardour seized the opportunity of quarrelling with him.

“What right have you to ask?” he retorted coarsely.

Frank's blood was up. He forgot his promise to Clara to keep their engagement secret; he forgot every thing but the unbridled insolence of Wardour's language and manner.

"A right which I insist on your respecting," he answered; "the right of being engaged to marry her."

Crayford's steady eyes were still on the watch; and Wardour felt them on him. A little more, and Crayford might openly interfere. Even Wardour recognized, for once, the necessity of controlling his temper, cost him what it might. He made his apologies, with overstrained politeness, to Frank.

"Impossible to dispute such a right as yours," he said. "Perhaps you will excuse me when you know that I am one of Miss Burnham's old friends. My father and her father were neighbors. We have always met like brother and sister" —

Frank generously stopped the apology there.

"Say no more," he interposed. "I was in the wrong: I lost my temper. Pray forgive me."

Wardour looked at him with a strange, reluctant interest, while he was speaking. Wardour asked an extraordinary question, when he had done.

“Is she very fond of you?”

Frank burst out laughing.

“My dear fellow,” he said, “come to our wedding, and judge for yourself.”

“Come to your wedding!” As he repeated the words, Wardour stole one glance at Frank, which Frank (employed in buckling his knapsack) failed to see. Crayford noticed it, and Crayford’s blood ran cold. Comparing the words which Wardour had spoken to him, while they were alone together, with the words that had just passed in his presence, he could draw but one conclusion. The woman whom Wardour had loved and lost was Clara Burnham. The man who had robbed him of her was Frank Aldersley. And Wardour had discovered it in the interval since they had last met. “Thank God!” thought Crayford: “the dice have parted them. Frank goes with the expedition, and Wardour stays behind with me.”

The reflection had barely occurred to him, Frank's thoughtless invitation to Wardour had just passed his lips, when the canvas screen over the doorway was drawn aside. Capt. Holding, and the officers who were to leave with the exploring party, returned to the main room on their way out. Seeing Crayford, Capt. Holding stopped to speak to him.

"I have a casualty to report," said the captain, "which diminishes our numbers by one. My second lieutenant, who was to have joined the exploring party, has had a fall on the ice. Judging by what the quartermaster tells me, I am afraid the poor fellow has broken his leg."

"I will supply his place," cried a voice at the other end of the hut.

Everybody looked round. The man who had spoken was Richard Wardour.

Crayford instantly interfered, so vehemently as to astonish all who knew him.

"No!" he said. "Not you, Richard; not you!"

"Why not?" Wardour asked sternly.

"Why not, indeed?" added Capt. Holding.

“Wardour is the very man to be useful on a long march. He is in perfect health, and he is the best shot among us. I was on the point of proposing him myself.”

Crayford failed to show his customary respect for his superior officer. He openly disputed the captain's conclusion.

“Wardour has no right to volunteer,” he rejoined. “It has been settled, Capt. Holding, that chance shall decide who is to go, and who is to stay.”

“And chance *has* decided it,” cried Wardour. “Do you think we are going to cast the dice again, and give an officer of ‘The Sea-Mew’ a chance of replacing an officer of ‘The Wanderer?’ There is a vacancy in our party, not in yours; and we claim the right of filling it as we please. I volunteer; and my captain backs me. Whose authority is to keep me here, after that?”

“Gently, Wardour,” said Capt. Holding. “A man who is in the right can afford to speak with moderation.” He turned to Crayford. “You must admit, yourself,” he continued,

“that Wardour is right this time. The missing man belongs to my command; and, in common justice, one of my officers ought to supply his place.”

It was impossible to dispute the matter further. The dullest man present could see that the captain's reply was unanswerable. In sheer despair Crayford took Frank's arm, and led him aside a few steps. The last chance left of parting the two men was the chance of appealing to Frank.

“My dear boy,” he began, “I want to say one friendly word to you on the subject of your health. I have already, if you remember, expressed my doubts whether you are strong enough to make one of an exploring party. I feel those doubts more strongly than ever at this moment. Will you take the advice of a friend who wishes you well?”

Wardour had followed Crayford. Wardour roughly interposed, before Frank could reply, —

“Let him alone!”

Crayford paid no heed to the interruption: he was too earnestly bent on withdrawing Frank

from the expedition to notice any thing that was said or done by the persons about him.

“Don’t, pray don’t, risk hardships which you are unfit to bear!” he went on entreatingly. “Your place can be easily filled. Change your mind, Frank. Stay here with me.”

Again Wardour interfered. Again he called out, “Leave him alone,” more roughly than ever. Still deaf and blind to every consideration but one, Crayford pressed his entreaties on Frank.

“You owned, yourself, just now, that you were not well seasoned to fatigue,” he persisted. “You feel, you *must* feel, how weak that last illness has left you. You know, I am sure you know, how unfit you are to brave exposure to cold, and long marches over the snow.”

Irritated beyond endurance by Crayford’s obstinacy ; seeing, or thinking he saw, signs of yielding in Frank’s face, — Wardour so far forgot himself as to seize Crayford by the arm, and attempt to drag him away from Frank. Crayford turned, and looked at him.

“Richard,” he said very quietly, “you are not yourself. I pity you. Drop your hand.”

Wardour relaxed his hold, with something of the sullen submission of a wild animal to its keeper. The momentary silence which followed gave Frank an opportunity of speaking at last.

"I am gratefully sensible, Crayford," he began, "of the interest which you take in me" —

"And you will follow my advice?" Crayford interposed eagerly.

"My mind is made up, old friend," Frank answered, firmly and sadly. "Forgive me for disappointing you. I am appointed to the expedition. With the expedition I go." He moved nearer to Wardour. In his innocence of all suspicion, he clapped Wardour heartily on the shoulder. "When I feel the fatigue," said poor, simple Frank, "you will help me, comrade; won't you? Come along!"

Wardour snatched his gun out of the hands of the sailor who was carrying it for him. His dark face became suddenly irradiated with a terrible joy.

"Come," he cried, "over the snow and over the ice! Come where no human footsteps

have ever trodden, and where no human trace is ever left!"

Blindly, instinctively, Crayford made an effort to part them. His brother officers, standing near, pulled him back. They looked at each other anxiously. The merciless cold, striking its victims in various ways, had struck, in some instances, at their reason first. Everybody loved Crayford. Was he, too, going on the dark way that others had taken before him? They forced him to seat himself on one of the lockers. "Steady, old fellow!" they said kindly, — "steady!" Crayford yielded, writhing inwardly under the sense of his own helplessness. What, in God's name, could he do? Could he denounce Wardour to Capt. Holding, on bare suspicion, without so much as the shadow of a proof to justify what he said? The captain would decline to insult one of his officers by even mentioning the monstrous accusation to him. The captain would conclude, as others had already concluded, that Crayford's mind was giving way under stress of cold and privation. No hope, literally no hope, now, but in the

numbers of the expedition. Officers and men, they all liked Frank. As long as they could stir hand or foot, they would help him on the way, — they would see that no harm came to him.

The word of command was given; the door was thrown open; the hut emptied rapidly. Over the merciless white snow, under the merciless black sky, the exploring party began to move. The sick and helpless men, whose last hope of rescue centred in their departing mess-mates, cheered faintly. Some few, whose days were numbered, sobbed and cried like women. Frank's voice faltered as he turned back, at the door, to say his last words to the friend who had been a father to him, —

“God bless you, Crayford!”

Crayford broke away from the officers near him, and, hurrying forward, seized Frank by both hands. Crayford held him as if he would never let him go.

“God preserve you, Frank! I would give all I have in the world to be with you. Good-by, good-by!”

Frank waved his hand, dashed away the tears that were gathering in his eyes, and hurried out. Crayford called after him, the last, the only warning that he could give, —

“While you can stand, keep with the main body, Frank!”

Wardour, waiting till the last; Wardour, following Frank through the snow-drift, — stopped, stepped back, and answered Crayford at the door, —

“While he can stand, he keeps with me.”

THIRD SCENE.

THE ICEBERG.

CHAPTER XII.

ALONE, alone on the frozen deep!

The arctic sun is rising dimly in the dreary sky. The beams of the cold northern moon, mingling strangely with the dawning light, clothe the snowy plains in hues of livid gray. An ice-field, on the far horizon, is moving slowly southward in the spectral light. Nearer, a stream of open water rolls its slow black waves past the edges of the ice. Nearer still, following the drift, an iceberg rears its crags and pinnacles to the sky; here glittering in the moonbeams, there looming dim and ghostlike in the ashy light.

Midway on the long sweep of the lower slope of the iceberg, what objects rise, and break the desolate monotony of the scene? In this awful

solitude, can signs appear which tell of human life? Yes. The black outline of a boat just shows itself, hauled up on the berg. In an ice-cavern behind the boat, the last red embers of a dying fire flicker, from time to time, over the figures of two men. One is seated, resting his back against the side of the cavern. The other lies prostrate, with his head on his comrade's knee. The first of these men is awake, and thinking. The second reclines, with his still white face turned up to the sky, — sleeping or dead. Days and days since, these two have fallen behind on the march of the expedition of relief. Days and days since, these two have been given up by their weary and failing companions as doomed and lost. He who sits thinking is Richard Wardour. He who lies sleeping or dead is Frank Aldersley.

The iceberg drifts slowly over the black water, through the ashy light. Minute by minute, the dying fire sinks. Minute by minute, the deathly cold creeps nearer and nearer to the lost men.

Richard Wardour rouses himself from his

thoughts, looks at the still white face beneath him, and places his hand on Frank's heart. It still beats feebly. Give him his share of the food and fuel still stored in the boat, and Frank may live through it. Leave him neglected where he lies, and his death is a question of hours; perhaps minutes, who knows?

Richard Wardour lifts the sleeper's head, and rests it against the cavern-side. He goes to the boat, and returns with a billet of wood. He stoops to place the wood on the fire, and stops. Frank is dreaming, and murmuring in his dream. A woman's name passes his lips. Frank is in England again, at the ball, whispering to Clara the confession of his love.

Over Richard Wardour's face there passes the shadow of a deadly thought. He rises from the fire: he takes the wood back to the boat. His iron strength is shaken, but it still holds out. They are drifting nearer and nearer to the open sea. He can launch the boat without help: he can take the food and the fuel with him. The sleeper on the iceberg is the man who has robbed him of Clara, who has wrecked the

hope and happiness of his life. Leave the man in his sleep, and let him die!

So the Tempter whispers. Richard Wardour tries his strength on the boat. It moves: he has got it under control. He stops, and looks round. Beyond him is the open sea. Beneath him is the man who has robbed him of Clara. The shadow of the deadly thought grows and darkens over his face. He waits, with his hands on the boat,—waits and thinks.

The iceberg drifts slowly over the black water, through the ashy light. Minute by minute, the dying fire sinks. Minute by minute, the deathly cold creeps nearer to the sleeping man. And still Richard Wardour waits,—waits and thinks.

FOURTH SCENE.

THE GARDEN.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE spring has come. The air of the April night just lifts the leaves of the sleeping flowers. The moon is queen in the cloudless and starless sky. The stillness of the midnight hour is abroad, over land and over sea.

In a villa on the westward shore of the Isle of Wight, the glass doors which lead from the drawing-room to the garden are yet open. The shaded lamp yet burns on the table. A lady sits by the lamp, reading. From time to time she looks out into the garden, and sees the white-robed figure of a young girl pacing slowly to and fro in the soft brightness of the moonlight on the lawn. Sorrow and suspense have set their mark on the lady. Not rivals only, but

friends who formerly admired her, agree now that she looks worn and aged. The more merciful judgment of others remarks, with equal truth, that her eyes, her hair, her simple grace and grandeur of movement, have lost but little of their olden charms. The truth lies, as usual, between the two extremes. In spite of sorrow and suffering, Mrs. Crayford is the beautiful Mrs. Crayford still.

The delicious silence of the hour is softly disturbed by the voice of the younger lady in the garden.

“Go to the piano, Lucy. It is a night for music. Play something that is worthy of the night.”

Mrs. Crayford looks round at the clock on the mantle-piece.

“My dear Clara, it is past twelve. Remember what the doctor told you. You ought to have been in bed an hour ago.”

“Half an hour, Lucy, — give me half an hour more! Look at the moonlight on the sea. Is it possible to go to bed on such a night as this? Play something, Lucy, — something spiritual and divine.”

Earnestly pleading with her friend, Clara advances towards the window. She, too, has suffered under the wasting influences of suspense. Her face has lost its youthful freshness; no delicate flush of color rises on it when she speaks. The soft gray eyes which won Frank's heart in the bygone time are sadly altered now. In repose, they have a dimmed and wearied look. In action, they are wild and restless, like eyes suddenly wakened from startling dreams. Robed in white, her soft brown hair hanging loosely over her shoulders, there is something weird and ghostlike in the girl, as she moves nearer and nearer to the window, in the full light of the moon; pleading for music that shall be worthy of the mystery and the beauty of the night.

"Will you come in here, if I play to you?" Mrs. Crayford asks. "It is a risk, my love, to be out so long in the night air."

"No, no! I like it. Play while I am out here, looking at the sea. It quiets me; it comforts me; it does me good."

She glides back, ghostlike, over the lawn.

Mrs. Crayford rises, and puts down the volume that she has been reading. It is a record of explorations in the arctic seas. The time has gone by when the two lonely women could take an interest in subjects not connected with their own anxieties. Now, when hope is fast failing them, now, when their last news of "The Wanderer" and "The Sea-Mew" is news that is more than two years old, — they can read of nothing, they can think of nothing, but dangers and discoveries, losses and rescues, in the terrible Polar seas.

Unwillingly Mrs. Crayford puts her book aside, and opens the piano. Mozart's "Air in A, with Variations," lies open on the instrument. One after another, she plays the lovely melodies, so simply, so purely beautiful, of that unpretending and unrivalled work. At the close of the Ninth Variation (Clara's favorite), she pauses, and turns towards the garden.

"Shall I stop there?" she asks.

There is no answer. Has Clara wandered away out of hearing of the music that she loves, — the music that harmonizes so subtly with the

tender beauty of the night? Mrs. Crayford rises, and advances to the window.

No! there is the white figure standing alone on the slope of the lawn: the head turned away from the house; the face looking out over the calm sea, whose gently rippling waters end in the dim line on the horizon, which is the line of the Hampshire coast.

Mrs. Crayford advances as far as the path before the window, and calls to her, —

“Clara!”

Again there is no answer. The white figure still stands immovably in its place.

With signs of distress in her face, but with no appearance of alarm, Mrs. Crayford returns to the room. Her own sad experience tells her what has happened. She summons the servants, and directs them to wait in the drawing-room until she calls to them. This done, she returns to the garden, and approaches the mysterious figure on the lawn.

Dead to the outer world, as if she lay already in her grave, insensible to touch, insensible to sound, motionless as stone, cold as stone, Clara

stands on the moonlit lawn, facing the seaward view. Mrs. Crayford waits at her side, patiently watching for the change which she knows is to come. "Cataplexy" as some call it, "hysteria" as others say, this alone is certain: the same interval always passes; the same change always appears.

It comes now. Not a change in her eyes: they still remain wide open, fixed, and glassy. The first movement is a movement of her hands. They rise slowly from her side, and waver in the air like the hands of a person groping in the dark. Another interval, and the movement spreads to her lips: they part and tremble. A few minutes more, and words begin to drop, one by one, from these parted lips, — words spoken in a lost, vacant tone, as if she is talking in her sleep.

Mrs. Crayford looks back at the house. Sad experience makes her suspicious of the servants' curiosity. Sad experience has long since warned her that the servants are not to be trusted within hearing of the wild words which Clara speaks in the trance. Has any one of

them ventured into the garden? No. They are out of hearing at the window, waiting for the signal which tells them that their help is needed.

Turning towards Clara once more, Mrs. Crayford hears the vacantly uttered words, falling faster and faster from her lips, —

“Frank! Frank! Frank! Don’t drop behind: don’t trust Richard Wardour. While you can stand, keep with the other men, Frank!”

(The farewell warning of Crayford in the solitudes of the frozen deep, repeated by Clara in the garden of her English home!)

A moment of silence follows; and in that moment the vision has changed. She sees him on the iceberg now, at the mercy of the bitterest enemy he has on earth. She sees him drifting over the black water, through the ashy light.

“Wake, Frank! wake, and defend yourself! Richard Wardour knows that I love you: Richard Wardour’s vengeance will take your life! Wake, Frank, wake! You are drifting to your death!” A low groan of horror bursts

from her, sinister and terrible to hear. "Drifting, drifting!" she whispers to herself. "Drifting to his death!"

Her glassy eyes suddenly soften, then close. A long shudder runs through her. A faint flush shows itself on the deadly pallor of her face, and fades again. Her limbs fail her. She sinks into Mrs. Crayford's arms.

The servants, answering the call for help, carry her into the house. They lay her insensible on her bed. After half an hour, or more, her eyes open again; this time with the light of life in them, — "open, and rest languidly on her friend sitting by the bedside.

"I have had a dreadful dream," she murmurs faintly. "Am I ill, Lucy? I feel so weak!"

Even as she says the words, sleep, gentle, natural sleep, takes her suddenly, as it takes young children weary with their play. Though it is all over now, though no further watching is required, Mrs. Crayford still keeps her place by the bedside, too anxious and too wakeful to retire to her own room.

On other occasions, she is accustomed to dis-

miss from her mind the words which drop from Clara in the trance. This time, the effort to dismiss them is beyond her power. The words haunt her. Vainly she recalls to memory all that the doctors have said to her, in speaking of Clara in the state of trance. "What she vaguely dreads for the lost man whom she loves is mingled, in her mind, with what she is constantly reading of trials, dangers, and escapes in the arctic seas. The most startling things that she may say or do are all attributable to this cause, and may all be explained in this way." So the doctors have spoken; and, thus far, Mrs. Crayford has shared their view. It is only to-night that the girl's words ring in her ear, with a strange prophetic sound in them. It is only to-night that she asks herself, "Is Clara present, in the spirit, with our loved and lost ones in the lonely north? Can mortal vision see the dead and living in the solitudes of the frozen deep?"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE night had passed.

Far and near, the garden-view looked its gayest and brightest in the light of the noonday sun. The cheering sounds which tell of life and action were audible all round the villa. From the garden of the nearest house rose the voices of children at play. Along the road at the back sounded the roll of wheels, as carts and carriages passed at intervals. Out on the blue sea, the distant splash of the paddles, the distant thump of the engines, told, from time to time, of the passage of steamers, entering or leaving the strait between the island and the mainland. In the trees, the birds sang gayly among the rustling leaves. In the house, the women-servants were laughing over some jest or story that cheered them at their work. It was a lively and pleasant time, a bright, enjoyable day.

The two ladies were out together ; resting on a garden seat, after a walk round the grounds.

They exchanged a few trivial words relating to the beauty of the day, and then said no more. Possessing the same consciousness of what she had seen in the trance which persons in general possess of what they have seen in a dream, believing in the vision as a supernatural revelation, Clara's worst forebodings were now, to her mind, realized as truths. Her last faint hope of ever seeing Frank again was now at an end. Intimate experience of her told Mrs. Crayford what was passing in Clara's mind, and warned her that the attempt to reason and remonstrate would be little better than a voluntary waste of words and time. The disposition which she had herself felt, on the previous night, to attach a superstitious importance to the words that Clara had spoken in a trance, had vanished with the return of the morning. Rest and reflection had quieted her mind, and had restored the composing influence of her sober sense. Sympathizing with Clara in all besides, she had no sympathy, as they sat together in

the pleasant sunshine, with Clara's gloomy despair of the future. She, who could still hope, had nothing to say to the sad companion who had done with hope. So the quiet minutes succeeded each other, and the two friends sat side by side in silence.

An hour passed; and the gate-bell of the villa rang.

They both started; they both knew the ring. It was the hour when the postman brought their newspapers from London. In past days, what hundreds on hundreds of times they had torn off the cover which enclosed the newspaper, and looked at the same column with the same weary mingling of hope and despair! There to-day, as it was yesterday; as it would be, if they lived, to-morrow, — there was the servant with Lucy's newspaper and Clara's newspaper in his hand. Would both of them do again to-day what both had done so often in the days that were gone?

No. Mrs. Crayford removed the cover from her newspaper as usual. Clara laid *her* newspaper aside, unopened, on the garden-seat.

In silence Mrs. Crayford looked where she

always looked, — at the column devoted to the latest intelligence from foreign parts. The instant her eye fell on the page, she started with a loud cry of joy. The newspaper fell from her trembling hand. She caught Clara in her arms. “O my darling, my darling! news of them at last!”

Without answering, without the slightest change in look or manner, Clara took the newspaper from the ground, and read the top line in the column, printed in capital letters: —

THE ARCTIC EXPEDITION.

She waited, and looked at Mrs. Crayford.

“Can you bear to hear it, Lucy,” she asked, “if I read it aloud?”

Mrs. Crayford was too agitated to answer in words. She signed impatiently to Clara to go on.

Clara read the news which followed the heading in capital letters. Thus it ran: —

“The following intelligence from St. John’s, Newfoundland, has reached us for publication. The whaling vessel ‘Blythewood’ is reported to

have met with the surviving officers and men of the expedition in Davis Strait. Many are stated to be dead, and some are supposed to be missing. The list of the saved, as collected by the people of the whaler, is not vouched for as being absolutely correct; the circumstances having been adverse to investigation. The vessel was pressed for time; and the members of the expedition, all more or less suffering from exhaustion, were not in a position to give the necessary assistance to inquiry. Further particulars may be looked for by the next mail."

The list of the survivors followed, beginning with the officers in the order of their rank. They both read the list together. The first name was Capt. Holding. The second was Lieut. Crayford.

There the wife's joy overpowered her. After a pause, she put her arm round Clara's waist, and spoke to her.

"O my love!" she murmured, "are you as happy as I am? Is Frank's name there too? The tears are in my eyes. Read for me: I can't read for myself."

The answer came in still, sad tones : —

“I have read as far as your husband’s name. I have no need to read farther.”

Mrs. Crayford dashed the tears from her eyes, steadied herself, and looked at the newspaper.

On the list of survivors the search was vain. Frank’s name was not among them. On a second list, headed “Dead or Missing,” the two first names that appeared were, —

FRANCIS ALDERSLEY

RICHARD WARDOUR.

In speechless distress and dismay, Mrs. Crayford looked at Clara. Had she force enough, in her feeble health, to sustain the shock that had fallen on her? Yes. She bore it with a strange, unnatural resignation: she looked, she spoke, with the sad self-possession of despair.

“I was prepared for it,” she said. “I saw them in the spirit last night. Richard Wardour has discovered the truth; and Frank has paid the penalty with his life; and I, I alone, am to blame.” She shuddered, and put her hand on her heart. “We shall not be long parted, Lucy. I shall go to him: he will not return to me.”

Those words were spoken with a calm certainty of conviction that was terrible to hear. "I have no more to say," she added after a moment, and rose to return to the house. Mrs. Crayford caught her by the hand, and forced her to take her seat again.

"Don't look at me, don't speak to me, in that horrible manner!" she exclaimed. "Clara, it is unworthy of a reasonable being, it is doubting the mercy of God, to say what you have just said. Look at the newspaper again. See! They tell you plainly that their information is not to be depended on: they warn you to wait for further particulars. The very words at the top of the list show how little they know of the truth. 'Dead or Missing.' On their own showing, it is quite as likely that Frank is missing as that Frank is dead. For all you know, the next mail may bring a letter from him. Are you listening to me?"

"Yes."

"Can you deny what I say?"

"No."

"'Yes,' 'no.' Is that the way to answer

me when I am so distressed, and so anxious about you?"

"I am sorry I spoke as I did, Lucy. We look at some subjects in very different ways. I don't dispute, dear, that yours is the reasonable view."

"You don't dispute?" retorted Mrs. Crayford warmly. "No: you do what is worse: you believe in your own opinion; you persist in your own conclusion, with the newspaper before you. Do you, or do you not, believe the newspaper?"

"I believe in what I saw last night."

"In what you saw last night! You, an educated woman, a clever woman, believing in a vision of your own fancy, a mere dream! I wonder you are not ashamed to acknowledge it."

"Call it a dream, if you like, Lucy. I have had other dreams at other times; and I have known them to be fulfilled."

"Yes," said Mrs. Crayford. "For once in a way they may have been fulfilled, by chance; and you notice it, and remember it, and pin your faith on it. Come, Clara, be honest.

What about the occasions when the chance has been against you, and your dreams have *not* been fulfilled? You superstitious people are all alike. You conveniently forget when your dreams and your presentiments prove false. For my sake, dear, if not your own," she continued in gentler and tenderer tones, "try to be more reasonable and more hopeful. Don't lose your trust in the future and your trust in God. God, who has saved my husband, can save Frank. While there is doubt, there is hope. Don't imbitter my happiness, Clara. Try to think as I think, if it is only to show that you love me."

She put her arm round the girl's neck, and kissed her. Clara returned the kiss. Clara answered sadly and submissively, —

"I do love you, Lucy. I *will* try."

Having answered in those terms, she sighed to herself, and said no more. It would have been plain, only too plain, to far less observant eyes than Mrs. Crayford's, that no salutary impression had been produced on her. She had ceased to defend her own way of thinking; she

spoke of it no more: but there was the terrible conviction of Frank's death at Wardour's hands, rooted as firmly as ever in her mind. Discouraged and distressed, Mrs. Crayford left her, and walked back towards the house.

CHAPTER XV.

AT the drawing-room window of the villa, there appeared a polite little man, with bright, intelligent eyes, and cheerful, sociable manners. Neatly dressed in professional black, he stood, self-proclaimed, a prosperous country-doctor, successful and popular in a wide circle of patients and friends. As Mrs. Crayford approached him, he stepped out briskly to meet her on the lawn, with both hands extended in courteous and cordial greeting.

“My dear madam, accept my heartfelt congratulations!” cried the doctor. “I have seen the good news in the paper; and I could hardly feel more rejoiced than I do now, if I had the honor of knowing Lieut. Crayford personally. We mean to celebrate the occasion at home. I said to my wife before I came out, ‘A bottle of the old Madeira at dinner to-day, mind! to

drink the lieutenant's health: God bless him!' And how is our interesting patient? The news is not altogether what we could wish, so far as she is concerned. I felt a little anxious, to tell you the truth, about the effect of it; and I have paid my visit to-day before my usual time. Not that I take a gloomy view of the news myself. No. There is clearly a doubt about the correctness of the information, so far as Mr. Aldersley is concerned; and that is a point, a great point, in Mr. Aldersley's favor. I give him the benefit of the doubt, as the lawyers say. Does Miss Burnham give him the benefit of the doubt too? I hardly dare hope it, I confess."

"Miss Burnham has grieved and alarmed me," Mrs. Crayford answered. "I was just thinking of sending for you, when we met here."

With those introductory words, she told the doctor exactly what had happened, repeating not only the conversation of that morning, between Clara and herself, but also the words which had fallen from Clara in the trance of the past night.

The doctor listened attentively. Little by little, its easy, smiling composure vanished from his face, as Mrs. Crayford went on, and left him completely transformed into a grave and thoughtful man.

“Let us go and look at her,” he said.

He seated himself by Clara's side, and carefully studied her face, with his hand on her pulse. There was no sympathy here between the dreamy, mystical temperament of the patient and the downright practical character of the doctor. Clara secretly disliked her medical attendant. She submitted impatiently to the close investigation of which he made her the object. He questioned her, and she answered irritably. Advancing a step farther (the doctor was not easily discouraged), he adverted to the news of the expedition, and took up the tone of remonstrance which had already been adopted by Mrs. Crayford. Clara declined to discuss the question. She rose with formal politeness, and requested permission to return to the house. The doctor attempted no further resistance.

“By all means, Miss Burnham,” he answered

resignedly, having first cast a look at Mrs. Crayford, which said plainly, "Stay here with me." Clara bowed her acknowledgments in cold silence, and left them together. The doctor's bright eyes followed the girl's wasted yet still graceful figure, as it slowly receded from view, with an expression of grave anxiety, which Mrs. Crayford noticed with grave misgiving on her side. He said nothing until Clara had disappeared under the veranda which ran round the garden-side of the house.

"I think you told me," he began, "that Miss Burnham has neither father nor mother living?"

"Yes. Miss Burnham is an orphan."

"Has she any near relatives?"

"No. You may speak to me as her guardian and her friend. Are you alarmed about her?"

"I am seriously alarmed. It is only two days since I called here last; and I see a marked change in her for the worse. Physically and morally a change for the worse. Don't needlessly alarm yourself. The case is not, I trust, entirely beyond the reach of remedy. The great hope for us is the hope that Mr. Alders-

ley may still be living. In that event I should feel no misgivings about the future. Her marriage would make a healthy and a happy woman of her. But, as things are, I own I dread that settled conviction in her mind that Mr. Aldersley is dead, and that her own death is soon to follow. In her present state of health, this idea (haunting her as it certainly will night and day) will have its influence on her body as well as on her mind. Unless we can check the mischief, her last reserves of strength will give way. If you wish for other advice, by all means send for it. You have my opinion."

"I am quite satisfied with your opinion," Mrs. Crayford replied. "For God's sake tell me what can we do!"

"We can try a complete change," said the doctor. "We can remove her at once from this place."

"She will refuse to leave it," Mrs. Crayford rejoined. "I have more than once proposed a change to her, and she always says, 'No.'"

The doctor paused for a moment, like a man collecting his thoughts.

"I heard something on my way here," he proceeded, "which suggests to my mind a method of meeting the difficulty that you have just mentioned. Unless I am entirely mistaken, Miss Burnham will not say, 'No' to the change that I have in view for her."

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Crayford eagerly.

"Pardon me if I ask you a question, on my part, before I reply," said the doctor. "Are you fortunate enough to possess any interest at the Admiralty?"

"Certainly. My father is in the secretary's office; and two of the lords of the Admiralty are friends of his."

"Excellent. Now I can speak out plainly with little fear of disappointing you. After what I have said, you will agree with me, that the only change in Miss Burnham's life which will be of any use to her is a change that will alter the present tone of her mind on the subject of Mr. Aldersley. Place her in a position to discover — not by reference to her own dis-tempered fancies and visions, but by reference to actual evidence and actual fact — whether

Mr. Aldersley is, or is not, a living man, and there will be an end of the hysterical delusions which now threaten to fatally undermine her health. Even taking matters at their worst, even assuming that Mr. Aldersley has died in the arctic seas, it will be less injurious to her to discover this positively than to leave her mind to feed on its own morbid superstitions and speculations for weeks and weeks together, while the next news from the expedition is on its way to England. In one word, I want you to be in a position, before the week is out, to put Miss Burnham's present conviction to a practical test. Suppose you could say to her, 'We differ, my dear, about Mr. Francis Aldersley. You declare, without the shadow of a reason for it, that he is certainly dead, and, worse still, that he has died by the act of one of his brother-officers. I assert, on the authority of the newspaper, that nothing of the sort has happened, and that the chances are all in favor of his being still a living man. What do you say to crossing the Atlantic, and deciding which of us is right, — you or I?' Do you think Miss Burnham will

say 'No' to that, Mrs. Crayford? If I know any thing of human nature, she will seize the opportunity as a means of converting you to a belief in the second-sight."

"Good heavens, doctor! Do you mean to tell me that we are to go to sea, and meet the arctic expedition on its way home?"

"Admirably guessed, Mrs. Crayford! That is exactly what I mean."

"But how is it to be done?"

"I will tell you immediately. I mentioned, didn't I? that I had heard something on my road to this house."

"Yes."

"Well, I met an old friend at my own gate, who walked with me a part of the way here. Last night my friend dined with the admiral at Portsmouth. Among the guests there was a member of the ministry who had brought the news about the expedition with him from London. This gentleman told the company there was very little doubt that the Admiralty would immediately send out a steam-vessel to meet the rescued men on the shores of America, and

bring them home. Wait a little, Mrs. Crayford. Nobody knows, as yet, under what rules and regulations the vessel will sail. Under somewhat similar circumstances, privileged people *have* been received as passengers, or rather as guests, in her Majesty's ships; and what has been conceded on former occasions may, by bare possibility, be conceded now. I can say no more. If you are not afraid of the voyage for yourself, I am not afraid of it (nay, I am all in favor of it, on medical grounds) for my patient. What do you say? Will you write to your father, and ask him to try what his interest will do with his friends at the Admiralty?"

Mrs. Crayford rose excitedly to her feet.

"Write!" she exclaimed. "I will do better than write. The journey to London is no great matter; and my housekeeper here is to be trusted to take care of Clara in my absence. I will see my father to-night. He shall make good use of his interest at the Admiralty, you may rely on that. Oh, my dear doctor, what a prospect it is! My husband! Clara! What a discovery you have made! What a treasure you are! How can I thank you?"

“Compose yourself, my dear madam. Don’t make too sure of success. We may consider Miss Burnham’s objections as disposed of beforehand. But suppose the Lords of the Admiralty say, ‘No’?”

“In that case, I shall be in London, doctor; and I shall go to them myself. Lords are only men; and men are not in the habit of saying ‘No’ to *me*.”

So they parted.

In a week from that day, her Majesty’s ship “Amazon” sailed for North America. Certain privileged persons specially interested in the arctic voyagers were permitted to occupy the empty state-rooms on board. On the list of these favored guests of the ship were the names of two ladies,—Mrs. Crayford and Miss Burnham.

FIFTH SCENE.

THE BOAT-HOUSE.

CHAPTER XVI.

ONCE more the open sea,—the sea whose waters break on the shores of Newfoundland. An English steamship lies at anchor in the offing. The vessel is plainly visible through the open doorway of a large boat-house on the shore,—one of the buildings attached to a fishing-station on the coast of the island.

The only person in the boat-house at this moment is a man in the dress of a sailor. He is seated on a chest, with a piece of cord in his hand, looking out idly at the sea. On the rough carpenter's table near him lies a strange object to be left in such a place,—a woman's veil.

What is the vessel lying at anchor in the offing?

The vessel is "The Amazon," despatched from England to receive the surviving officers and men of the arctic expedition. The meeting has been successfully effected on the shores of North America three days since; but the homeward voyage has been delayed by a storm, which has driven the ship out of her course. Taking advantage, on the third day, of the first returning calm, the commander of "The Amazon" has anchored off the coast of Newfoundland, and has sent ashore to increase his supplies of water before he sails for England. The weary passengers have landed for a few hours to refresh themselves after the discomforts of the tempest. Among them are the two ladies. The veil left on the table in the boat-house is Clara's veil.

And who is the man sitting on the chest, with the cord in his hand, looking out idly at the sea? The man is the only cheerful person in the ship's company: in other words, John Want.

Still reposing on the chest, our friend, who never grumbles, is surprised by the sudden appearance of a sailor at the boat-house door.

"Look sharp with your work, there, John Want!" says the sailor. "Lieut. Crayford is just coming in to look after you."

With this warning the messenger disappears again. John Want rises with a groan, turns the chest up on one end, and begins to fasten the cord round it. The ship's cook is not a man to look back on his rescue with the feeling of unmitigated satisfaction which animates his companions in trouble. On the contrary, he is ungratefully disposed to regret the north pole.

"If I had only known," thus runs the train of thought in the mind of John Want, — "if I had only known, before I was rescued, that I was to be brought to this place, I believe I should have preferred staying at the north pole. I was very happy keeping up everybody's spirits at the north pole. Taking one thing with another, I think I must have been very comfortable at the north pole — if I had only known it. Another man in my place might be inclined to say that this Newfoundland boat-house was rather a sloppy, slimy, draughty, fishy sort of a habitation to take shelter in. Another

man might object to perpetual Newfoundland fogs, perpetual Newfoundland codfish, and perpetual Newfoundland dogs. We had some very nice bears at the north pole. Never mind, it's all one to me: *I don't grumble.*"

"Have you done cording that box?"

This time, the voice is a voice of authority: the man at the doorway is Lieut. Crayford himself. John Want answers his officer in his own cheerful way.

"I've done it as well as I can, sir; but the damp of this place is beginning to tell upon our very ropes. I say nothing about our lungs: I only say our ropes."

Crayford answers sharply. He seems to have lost his former relish for the humor of John Want.

"Pooh! To look at your wry face, one would think that our rescue from the arctic regions was a downright misfortune. You deserve to be sent back again."

"I could be just as cheerful as ever, sir, if I *was* sent back again. I hope I'm thankful; but I don't like to hear the north pole run down in

such a fishy place as this. It was very clean and snowy at the north pole; and it's very damp and sandy here. Do you never miss your bone soup, sir? *I* do. It mightn't have been strong; but it was very hot; and the cold seemed to give it a kind of a meaty flavor as it went down. Was it you that was a-coughing so long last night, sir? I don't presume to say any thing against the air of these latitudes; but I should be glad to know it wasn't you that was a-coughing so hollow. Would you be so obliging as just to feel the state of these ropes with the ends of your fingers, sir? You can dry them afterwards on the back of my jacket."

"You ought to have a stick laid on the back of your jacket. Take that box down to the boat directly, you croaking vagabond! You would have grumbled in the garden of Eden."

The philosopher of the expedition was not a man to be silenced by referring him to the garden of Eden. Paradise itself was not perfect to John Want.

"I hope I could be cheerful anywhere, sir," said the ship's cook. "But, you mark my

words, there must have been a deal of trouble some work with the flower-beds in the garden of Eden."

Having entered that unanswerable protest, John Want shouldered the box and drifted drearily out of the boat-house.

Left by himself, Crayford looked at his watch, and called to a sailor outside.

"Where are the ladies?" he asked.

"Mrs. Crayford is coming this way, sir. She was just behind you, when you came in."

"Is Miss Burnham with her?"

"No, sir. Miss Burnham is down on the beach with the passengers. I heard the young lady asking after you, sir."

"Asking after me?" Crayford considered with himself as he repeated the words. He added in lower and graver tones, "You had better tell Miss Burnham you have seen me here."

The man made his salute, and went out. Crayford took a turn in the boat-house.

Rescued from death in the arctic wastes, and re-united to a beautiful wife, the lieutenant

looked, nevertheless, unaccountably anxious and depressed. What could he be thinking of? He was thinking of Clara.

On the first day when the rescued men were received on board "The Amazon," Clara had embarrassed and distressed, not Crayford only, but the other officers of the expedition as well, by the manner in which she questioned them on the subject of Francis Aldersley and Richard Wardour. She had shown no signs of dismay or despair when she heard that no news had been received of the two missing men. She had even smiled sadly to herself, when Crayford (out of compassionate regard for her) declared that he and his comrades had not given up the hope of seeing Frank and Wardour yet. It was only when the lieutenant had expressed himself in those terms, and when it was hoped that the painful subject had been dismissed, that Clara had startled every one present by announcing that she had something still to say in relation to Frank and Wardour, which had not been said yet. Though she spoke guardedly, her next words revealed suspicions

of foul play lurking in her mind, exactly reflecting similar suspicions lurking in Crayford's mind, which so distressed the lieutenant, and so surprised his comrades, as to render them quite incapable of answering her. The warnings of the storm which shortly afterwards broke over the vessel were then visible in sea and sky. Crayford made them his excuse for abruptly leaving the cabin, in which the conversation had taken place. His brother-officers, profiting by his example, pleaded their duties on deck, and followed him out.

On the next day, and the next, the tempest still raged; and the passengers were not able to leave their state-rooms. But now, when the weather had moderated, and the ship had anchored, now, when officers and passengers alike were on shore, with leisure-time at their disposal, Clara had opportunities of returning to the subject of the lost men, and of asking questions in relation to them, which would make it impossible for Crayford to plead an excuse for not answering her. How was he to meet those questions? How could he still keep her in ignorance of the truth?

These were the reflections which now troubled Crayford, and which presented him, after his rescue, in the strangely inappropriate character of a depressed and anxious man. His brother-officers, as he well knew, looked to him to take the chief responsibility. If he declined to accept it, he would instantly confirm the horrible suspicion in Clara's mind. The emergency must be met; but how to meet it at once honorably and mercifully was more than Crayford could tell. He was still lost in his own gloomy thoughts, when his wife entered the boat-house. Turning to look at her, he saw his own perturbations and anxieties plainly reflected in Mrs. Crayford's face.

"Have you seen any thing of Clara?" he asked. "Is she still on the beach?"

"She is following me to this place," Mrs. Crayford replied. "I have been speaking to her this morning. She is just as resolute as ever to insist on your telling her of the circumstances under which Frank is missing. As things are, you have no alternative but to answer her."

“Help me to answer her, Lucy. Tell me, before she comes in, how this dreadful suspicion first took possession of her. All she could possibly have known, when we left England, was that the two men were appointed to separate ships. What could have led her to suspect that they had come together?”

“She was firmly persuaded, William, that they *would* come together when the expedition left England. And she had read, in books of arctic travel, of men left behind by their comrades on the march, and of men adrift on icebergs. With her mind full of these images and forebodings, she saw Frank and Wardour (or dreamed of them) in one of her attacks of trance. I was by her side: I heard what she said at the time. She warned Frank that Wardour had discovered the truth. She called out to him, ‘While you can stand, keep with the other men, Frank!’”

“Good God!” cried Crayford. “I warned him myself, almost in those very words, the last time I saw him.”

“Don’t acknowledge it, William. Keep her

in ignorance of what you have just told me. She will not take it for what it is, a startling coincidence, and nothing more: she will accept it as positive confirmation of the faith, the miserable superstitious faith, that is in her. So long as you don't actually know that Frank is dead, and that he has died by Wardour's hand, deny what she says, mislead her for her own sake, dispute all her conclusions as I dispute them. Help me to raise her to the better and nobler belief in the mercy of God." She stopped, and looked round nervously at the doorway. "Hush!" she whispered. "Do as I have told you. Clara is here."

CHAPTER XVII.

CLARA stopped at the doorway, looking back wards and forwards distrustfully between the husband and wife. Entering the boat-house, and approaching Crayford, she took his arm, and led him away a few steps from the place in which Mrs. Crayford was standing.

“There is no storm now, and there are no duties to be done on board the ship,” she said, with the faint sad smile which it wrung Crayford’s heart to see. “You are Lucy’s husband, and you have an interest in me for Lucy’s sake. Don’t shrink on that account from giving me pain: I can bear pain. Friend and brother, will you believe that I have courage enough to hear the worst? Will you promise not to deceive me about Frank?”

The gentle resignation in her voice, the sad pleading in her look, shook Crayford’s self-

possession at the outset. He answered her in the worst possible manner, — he answered evasively.

“My dear Clara,” he said, “what have I done that you should suspect me of deceiving you?”

She looked him searchingly in the face, then glanced with renewed distrust at Mrs. Crayford. There was a moment of silence. Before any of the three could speak again, they were interrupted by the appearance of one of Crayford’s brother-officers, followed by two sailors, carrying a hamper between them. Crayford instantly dropped Clara’s arm, and seized the welcome opportunity of speaking of other things.

“Any instructions from the ship, Steventon?” he asked, approaching the officer.

“Verbal instructions only,” Steventon replied. “The ship will sail with the-flood tide. We shall fire a gun to collect the people, and send another boat ashore. In the mean time, here are some refreshments for the passengers. The ship is in a state of confusion: the ladies will eat their luncheon more comfortably here.”

Hearing this, Mrs. Crayford took *her* opportunity of silencing Clara next.

"Come, my dear," she said. "Let us lay the cloth, before the gentlemen come in."

Clara was too seriously bent on attaining the object which she had in view to be silenced in that way. "I will help you directly," she answered; then crossed the room, and addressed herself to the officer, whose name was Steventon.

"Can you spare me a few minutes?" she asked. "I have something to say to you."

"I am entirely at your service, Miss Burnham."

Answering in those words, Steventon dismissed the two sailors. Mrs. Crayford looked anxiously at her husband. Crayford whispered to her, "Don't be alarmed about Steventon. I have cautioned him: his discretion is to be depended on."

Clara beckoned to Crayford to return to her.

"I will not keep you long," she said. "I will promise not to distress Mr. Steventon. Young as I am, you shall both find that I am capable of self-control. I won't ask you to go

back to the story of your past sufferings. I only want to be sure that I am right about one thing, — I mean about what happened at the time when the exploring party was despatched in search of help. As I understand it, you cast lots among yourselves who was to go with the party, and who was to remain behind. Frank cast the lot to go." She paused, shuddering. "And Richard Wardour," she went on, "cast the lot to remain behind. On your honor, as officers and gentlemen, is this the truth?"

"On my honor," Crayford answered, "it is the truth."

"On my honor," Steventon repeated, "it is the truth."

She looked at them, carefully considering her next words, before she spoke again.

"You both drew the lot to stay in the huts," she said, addressing Crayford and Steventon; "and you are both here. Richard Wardour drew the lot to stay; and Richard Wardour is not here. How does his name come to be with Frank's, on the list of the missing?"

The question was a dangerous one to answer.

Steventon left it to Crayford to reply. Once again he answered evasively.

"It doesn't follow, my dear," he said, "that the two men were missing together, because their names happen to come together on the list."

Clara instantly drew the inevitable conclusion from that ill-considered reply.

"Frank is missing from the party of relief," she said. "Am I to understand that Wardour is missing from the huts?"

Both Crayford and Steventon hesitated. Mrs. Crayford cast one indignant look at them, and told the necessary lie, without a moment's hesitation.

"Yes," she said. "Wardour is missing from the huts."

Quickly as she had spoken, she had still spoken too late. Clara had noticed the momentary hesitation on the part of the two officers. She turned to Steventon.

"I trust to your honor," she said quietly. "Am I right, or wrong, in believing that Mrs. Crayford is mistaken?"

She had addressed herself to the right man of the two. Steventon had no wife present to exercise authority over him. Steventon — put on his honor, and fairly forced to say something — owned the truth. Wardour had replaced an officer whom accident had disabled from accompanying the party of relief; and Wardour and Frank were missing together.

Clara looked at Mrs. Crayford.

“You hear?” she said. “It is you who are mistaken, not I. What you call ‘accident,’ what I call ‘fate,’ brought Richard Wardour and Frank together as members of the same expedition, after all.” Without waiting for a reply, she again turned to Steventon, and surprised him by changing the painful subject of the conversation of her own accord.

“Have you been in the Highlands of Scotland?” she asked.

“I have never been in the Highlands,” the lieutenant replied.

“Have you ever read, in books about the Highlands, of such a thing as ‘the second-sight’?”

“Yes.”

“Do you believe in the second-sight?”

Steventon politely declined to commit himself to a direct reply.

“I don’t know what I might have done, if I had ever been in the Highlands,” he said. “As it is, I have had no opportunities of giving the subject any serious consideration.”

“I won’t put your credulity to the test,” Clara proceeded. “I won’t ask you to believe any thing more extraordinary than that I had a strange dream in England, not very long since. My dream showed me what you have just acknowledged, and more than that. How did the two missing men come to be parted from their companions? Were they lost by pure accident? or were they deliberately left behind on the march?”

Crayford made a last vain effort to check her inquiries at the point which they had now reached.

“Neither Steventon nor I were members of the party of relief,” he said. “How are we to answer you?”

"Your brother-officers who *were* members of the party must have told you what happened," Clara rejoined. "I only ask you and Mr. Steventon to tell me what they told you."

Mrs. Crayford interposed again, with a practical suggestion this time.

"The luncheon is not unpacked yet," she said. "Come, Clara, this is our business; and the time is passing."

"The luncheon can wait a few minutes longer," Clara answered. "Bear with my obstinacy," she went on, laying her hand caressingly on Crayford's shoulder. "Tell me how those two came to be separated from the rest. You have always been the kindest of friends; don't begin to be cruel to me now."

The tone in which she made her entreaty to Crayford went straight to the sailor's heart. He gave up the hopeless struggle: he let her see a glimpse of the truth.

"On the third day out," he said, "Frank's strength failed him. He fell behind the rest from fatigue."

"Surely they waited for him?"

"It was a serious risk to wait for him, my child. Their lives (and the lives of the men they had left in the huts) depended, in that dreadful climate, on their pushing on. But Frank was a favorite. They waited half a day to give Frank the chance of recovering his strength."

There he stopped. There the imprudence into which his fondness for Clara had led him showed itself plainly, and closed his lips.

It was too late to take refuge in silence. Clara was determined on hearing more.

She questioned Steventon next.

"Did Frank go on again after the half-day's rest?" she asked.

"He tried to go on"—

"And failed?"

"Yes."

"What did the men do when he failed? Did they turn cowards? Did they desert Frank?"

She had purposely used language which might irritate Steventon into answering her plainly. He was a young man: he fell into the snare that she had set for him.

"Not one among them was a coward, Miss Burnham," he replied warmly. "You are speaking cruelly and unjustly of as brave a set of fellows as ever lived. The strongest man among them set the example: he volunteered to stay by Frank, and to bring him on in the track of the exploring party."

There Steventon stopped, conscious, on his side, that he had said too much. Would she ask him who this volunteer was? No. She went straight on to the most embarrassing question that she had put yet, referring to the volunteer as if Steventon had already mentioned his name.

"What made Richard Wardour so ready to risk his life for Frank's sake?" she said to Crayford. "Did he do it out of friendship for Frank? Surely you can tell me that? Carry your memory back to the days when you were all living in the huts. Were Frank and Wardour friends at that time? Did you never hear any angry words pass between them?"

There Mrs. Crayford saw her opportunity of giving her husband a timely hint.

"My dear child," she said, "how can you expect him to remember that? There must have been plenty of quarrels among the men, all shut up together, and all weary of each other's company, no doubt."

"Plenty of quarrels," Crayford repeated, "and every one of them made up again."

"And every one of them made up again," Mrs. Crayford reiterated, in her turn. "There, a plainer answer than that you can't wish to have. *Now* are you satisfied? Mr. Steventon, come and lend a hand (as you say at sea) with the hamper: Clara won't help me. William, don't stand there doing nothing. This hamper holds a great deal. We must have a division of labor: your division shall be laying the table-cloth. Don't handle it in that clumsy way. You unfold a table-cloth as if you were unfurling a sail. Put the knives on the right, and the forks on the left, and the napkin and the bread between them. Clara, if you are not hungry in this fine air, you ought to be. Come and do your duty; come and have some lunch."

She looked up as she spoke. Clara appeared

to have yielded at last to the conspiracy to keep her in the dark. She had returned slowly to the boat-house doorway; and she was standing alone on the threshold, looking out. Approaching her to lead her to the luncheon-table, Mrs. Crayford could hear that she was speaking softly to herself. She was repeating the farewell words which Richard Wardour had spoken to her at the ball: —

“ ‘ A time may come when I shall forgive *you*; but the man who has robbed me of you shall rue the day when you and he first met.’ O Frank, Frank! does Richard still live with your blood on his conscience, and my image in his heart? ”

Her lips suddenly closed. She started, and drew back from the doorway, trembling violently. Mrs. Crayford looked out at the quiet seaward view.

“ Any thing there that frightens you, my dear? ” she asked. “ I can see nothing, except the boats drawn up on the beach. ”

“ *I* can see nothing, either, Lucy. ”

“ And yet you are trembling, as if there was

something dreadful in the view from this door."

"There *is* something dreadful. I feel it, though I see nothing. I feel it nearer and nearer in the empty air, darker and darker in the sunny light. I don't know what it is. Take me away! No, not out on the beach. I can't pass the door. Somewhere else, somewhere else!"

Mrs. Crayford looked round her, and noticed a second door, at the inner end of the boat-house. She spoke to her husband.

"See where that door leads to, William."

Crayford opened the door. It led into a desolate enclosure, half garden, half yard. Some nets stretched on poles were hanging up to dry. No other objects were visible: not a living creature appeared in the place. "It doesn't look very inviting, my dear," said Mrs. Crayford. "I am at your service, however. What do you say?"

She offered her arm to Clara as she spoke. Clara refused it. She took Crayford's arm, and clung to him.

"I'm frightened, dreadfully frightened," she

said to him faintly. “*You* keep with me. A woman is no protection. I want to be with *you*.” She looked round again at the boat-house door-way. “Oh!” she whispered, “I’m cold all over: I’m frozen with fear of this place. Come into the yard; come into the yard!”

“Leave her to me,” said Crayford to his wife. “I will call you, if she doesn’t get better in the open air.”

He took her out at once, and closed the yard-door behind them.

“Mr. Steventon, do you understand this?” asked Mrs. Crayford. “What can she possibly be frightened of?”

She put the question, still looking mechanically at the door by which her husband and Clara had gone out. Receiving no reply, she glanced round at Steventon. He was standing on the opposite side of the luncheon-table, with his eyes fixed attentively on the view from the main door-way of the boat-house. Mrs. Crayford looked where Steventon was looking. This time there was something visible. She saw the shadow of

a human figure projected on the stretch of smooth yellow sand in front of the boat-house.

In a moment more the figure appeared. A man came slowly into view, and stopped on the threshold of the door.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE man was a sinister and terrible object to look at. His eyes glared like the eyes of a wild animal; his head was bare; his long gray hair was torn and tangled; his miserable garments hung about him in rags. He stood in the doorway, a speechless figure of misery and want, staring at the well-spread table like a hungry dog.

Steventon spoke to him, —

“Who are you?”

He answered in a hoarse hollow voice, —

“A starving man.”

He advanced a few steps, slowly and painfully, as if he were sinking under fatigue.

“Throw me some bones from the table,” he said. “Give me my share along with the dogs.”

There was madness, as well as hunger, in his

eyes while he spoke those words. Steventon placed Mrs. Crayford behind him, so that he might be easily able to protect her in case of need, and beckoned to two sailors, who were passing the door of the boat-house at the time.

“Give the man some bread and meat,” he said, “and wait near him.”

The outcast seized on the bread and meat with lean, long-nailed hands, that looked like claws. After his first mouthful of the food, he stopped, considered vacantly with himself, and broke the bread and meat into two portions. One portion he put into an old canvas wallet that hung over his shoulder: the other he devoured voraciously. Steventon questioned him.

“Where do you come from?”

“From the sea.”

“Wrecked?”

“Yes.”

Steventon turned to Mrs. Crayford.

“There may be some truth in the poor wretch’s story,” he said. “I heard something of a strange boat having been cast on the beach,

thirty or forty miles higher up the coast. — When were you wrecked, my man ? ”

The starving creature looked up from his food, and made an effort to collect his thoughts, to exert his memory. It was not to be done. He gave up the attempt in despair. His language, when he spoke, was as wild as his looks.

“ I can’t tell you,” he said. “ I can’t get the wash of the sea out of my ears. I can’t get the shining stars all night, and the burning sun all day, out of my brain. When was I wrecked ? When was I first adrift in the boat ? When did I get the tiller in my hand, and fight against hunger and sleep ? When did the gnawing in my breast, and the burning in my head, first begin ? I have lost all reckoning of it. I can’t think ; I can’t sleep ; I can’t get the wash of the sea out of my ears. What are you baiting me with questions for ? Let me eat ! ”

Even the sailors pitied him. The sailors asked leave of their officer to add a little drink to his meal.

“ We’ve got a drop of grog with us, sir, in a bottle. May we give it to him ? ”

“Certainly!”

He took the bottle fiercely, as he had taken the food, drank a little, stopped, and considered with himself again. He held up the bottle to the light, and, marking how much liquor it contained, carefully drank half of it only. This done, he put the bottle in his wallet along with the food.

“Are you saving it up for another time?” said Steventon.

“I’m saving it up,” the man answered. “Never mind what for: that’s my secret.”

He looked round the boat-house as he made that reply, and noticed Mrs. Crayford for the first time.

“A woman among you!” he said. “Is she English? Is she young? Let me look closer at her.”

He advanced a few steps towards the table.

“Don’t be afraid, Mrs. Crayford,” said Steventon.

“I am not afraid,” Mrs. Crayford replied. “He frightened me at first: he interests me now. Let him speak to me if he wishes it.”

He never spoke. He stood in dead silence, looking long and anxiously at the beautiful Englishwoman.

"Well?" said Steventon.

He shook his head sadly, and drew back again with a heavy sigh.

"No," he said to himself, "that's not *her* face. No, not found yet."

Mrs. Crayford's interest was strongly excited. She ventured to speak to him.

"Who is it you want to find?" she asked. "Your wife?"

He shook his head again.

"Who, then? What is she like?"

He answered that question in words. His hoarse hollow voice softened little by little, into sorrowful and gentle tones.

"Young," he said, "with a fair, sad face; with kind, tender eyes; with a soft, clear voice, — young and loving and merciful. I keep her face in my mind, though I can keep nothing else. I must wander, wander, wander, — restless, sleepless, homeless, — till I find *her*. Over the ice, and over the snow, tossing on the sea,

tramping over the land, awake all night, awake all day, — wander, wander, wander, till I find *her*."

He waved his hand with a gesture of farewell, and turned wearily to go out.

At the same moment Crayford opened the yard-door.

"I think you had better come to Clara," he began, and checked himself, noticing the stranger. "Who is that?"

The shipwrecked man, hearing another voice in the room, looked round slowly over his shoulder. Struck by his appearance, Crayford advanced a little nearer to him. Mrs. Crayford spoke to her husband as he passed her.

"It's only a poor mad creature, William," she whispered, "shipwrecked and starving."

"Mad?" Crayford repeated, approaching nearer and nearer to the man. "Am *I* in my right senses?" He suddenly sprang on the outcast, and seized him by the throat. "Richard Wardour!" he cried in a voice of fury. "Alive — alive, to answer for Frank!"

The man struggled. Crayford held him.

"Where is Frank?" he said. "You villain, where is Frank?"

The man resisted no longer. He repeated vacantly:—

"Villain? and where is Frank?"

As the name escaped his lips, Clara appeared at the open yard-door, and hurried into the room.

"I heard Richard's name," she said. "I heard Frank's name. What does it mean?"

At the sound of her voice, the outcast renewed the struggle to free himself, with a sudden frenzy of strength which Crayford was not able to resist. He broke away, before the sailors could come to their officer's assistance. Half-way down the length of the room, he and Clara met one another face to face. A new light sparkled in the poor wretch's eyes: a cry of recognition burst from his lips. He flung one hand up wildly in the air. "Found!" he shouted, and rushed out to the beach before any of the men present could stop him.

Mrs. Crayford put her arms round Clara, and held her up. She had not made a movement: she had not spoken a word. The sight of Wardour's face had petrified her.



"'Saved, Clara!' he cried, 'Saved for you! He released the man and placed him in Clara's arms.'"—Page 177.

The minutes passed; and there rose a sudden burst of cheering from the sailors on the beach, near the spot where the fishermen's boats were drawn up. Every man left his work. Every man waved his cap in the air. The passengers near at hand caught the infection of enthusiasm, and joined the crew. A moment more, and Richard Wardour appeared again in the doorway, carrying a man in his arms. He staggered, breathless with the effort that he was making, to the place where Clara stood, held up in Mrs. Crayford's arms.

"Saved, Clara!" he cried, — "saved for *you!*"

He released the man, and placed him in Clara's arms.

Frank, footsore and weary, but living, saved, saved for *her!*

"Now, Clara," cried Mrs. Crayford, "which of us is right? — I who believed in the mercy of God, or you who believed in a dream?"

She never answered: she clung to Frank in speechless ecstasy: she never even looked at the man who had preserved him, in the first

absorbing joy of seeing Frank alive. Step by step, slower and slower, Richard Wardour drew back, and left them by themselves.

"I may rest now," he said faintly. "I may sleep at last. The task is done. The struggle is over."

His last reserves of strength had been given to Frank. He stopped; he staggered; his hands wavered feebly in search of support. But for one faithful friend, he would have fallen. Crayford caught him. Crayford laid his old comrade gently on some sails strewn in a corner, and pillowed Wardour's weary head on his own bosom. The tears streamed over his face. "Richard, dear Richard!" he said, "remember, and forgive me."

Richard neither heeded nor heard him. His dim eyes still looked across the room at Clara and Frank.

"I have made *her* happy," he murmured. "I may lay down my weary head now on the mother-earth that hushes all her children to rest at last. Sink, heart, sink, sink, to rest! Oh, look at them!" he said to Crayford, with a

burst of grief. "They have forgotten *me* already."

It was true. The interest was all with the two lovers. Frank was young and handsome and popular. Officers, passengers, and sailors, they all crowded round Frank. They all forgot the martyred man who *had* saved him, — the man who was dying in Crayford's arms.

Crayford tried once more to attract his attention, to win his recognition, while there was yet time.

"Richard, speak to me! — speak to your old friend!"

He looked round: he vacantly repeated Crayford's last word.

"Friend?" he said. "My eyes are dim, friend; my mind is dull. I have lost all memories, but the memory of *her*. Dead thoughts, all dead thoughts but that one. And yet you look at me kindly. Why has your face gone down with the wreck of all the rest?"

He paused. His face changed; his thoughts drifted back from present to past. He looked at Crayford vacantly, lost in the terrible remem-

branches that were rising in him, as the shadows rise with the coming night.

“Hark ye, friend,” he whispered. “Never let Frank know it. There was a time when the fiend within me hungered for his life. I had my hands on the boat. I heard the voice of the Tempter speaking to me, ‘Launch it, and leave him to die!’ I waited with my hands on the boat, and my eyes on the place where he slept. ‘Leave him, leave him!’ the voice whispered. ‘Love him,’ the lad’s voice answered, moaning and murmuring in his sleep, — ‘love him, Clara, for helping *me*.’ I heard the morning wind come up in the silence over the great deep. Far and near I heard the groaning of the floating ice, floating, floating to the clear water and the balmy air. And the wicked voice floated away with it, — away, away, away forever. ‘Love him, love him, Clara, for helping *me*.’ No wind could float that away. ‘Love him, Clara’” —

His voice sank into silence: his head dropped on Crayford’s breast. Frank saw it. Frank struggled up on his bleeding feet, and parted

the friendly throng round him. Frank had not forgotten the man who had saved him.

"Let me go to him!" he cried. "I must and will go to him! Clara, come with me."

Clara and Steventon supported him between them. He fell on his knees at Wardour's side; he put his hand on Wardour's bosom.

"Richard!"

The weary eyes opened again; the sinking voice was heard feebly once more.

"Ah, poor Frank! I didn't forget you, Frank, when I came here to beg. I remembered you, lying down outside in the shadow of the boats. I saved you your share of the food and drink. Too weak to get at it now. A little rest, Frank. I shall soon be strong enough to carry you down to the ship."

The end was near. They all saw it now. The men reverently uncovered their heads in the presence of death. In an agony of despair, Frank appealed to the friends round him.

"Get something to strengthen him, for God's sake! Oh, men, men, I should never have been here but for him! He has given all his

strength to my weakness; and now see how strong *I* am, and how weak *he* is. Clara, I held by his arm all over the ice and snow. *He* kept watch when I was senseless in the open boat. *His* hand dragged me out of the waves when we were wrecked. Speak to him, Clara, speak to him!" His voice failed him; and his head dropped on Wardour's breast.

She spoke as well as her tears would let her.

"Richard, have you forgotten me?"

He rallied at the sound of that beloved voice. He looked up at her as she knelt at his head.

"Forgotten you?" Still looking at her, he lifted his hand with an effort, and laid it on Frank. "Should I have been strong enough to save *him*, if I could have forgotten *you*?" He waited a moment, and turned his face feebly towards Crayford. "Stay," he said. "Some one was here, and spoke to me." A faint light of recognition glimmered in his eyes. "Ah, Crayford! I recollect now. Dear Crayford! Come nearer. My mind clears, but my eyes grow dim. You will remember me kindly for Frank's sake? Poor Frank, why does he hide

his face? Is he crying? Nearer, Clara, I want to look my last at *you*. My sister Clara! Kiss me, sister, kiss me, before I die."

She stooped, and kissed his forehead. A faint smile trembled on his lips. It passed away; and stillness possessed the face,—the stillness of death.

Crayford's voice was heard in the silence.

"The loss is ours," he said: "the gain is his. He has won the greatest of all conquests,—the conquest of himself; and he has died in the moment of victory. Not one of us here but may live to envy *his* glorious death."

The distant report of a gun came from the ship in the offing, and signalled the return to England and to home.

A TERRIBLY STRANGE BED.

16*

185

NOTE BY THE PUBLISHERS. — The story of "A Terribly Strange Bed" is memorable as having formed the medium for introducing Mr. Collins to the public as a reader ; his successful *début* having been made in London, in the spring of 1873. It is now printed as a pendant to the story, which, in a less complete form, signalized his last appearance on the reading-stage, in the spring of 1874. The story, although not, like "The Frozen Deep," entirely new, has never previously been included in any authorized edition of the author's works published in America.

PROLOGUE TO THE STORY.

BEFORE I begin, by the aid of my wife's patient attention and ready pen, to relate any of the stories which I have heard at various times from persons whose likenesses I have been employed to take, it will not be amiss if I try to secure the reader's interest in the following pages, by briefly explaining how I became possessed of the narrative matter which they contain.

Of myself I have nothing to say, but that I have followed the profession of a travelling portrait-painter for the last fifteen years. The pursuit of my calling has not only led me all through England, but has taken me twice to Scotland, and once to Ireland. In moving from district to district, I am never guided beforehand by any settled plan. Sometimes the letters of recommendation which I get from persons who are satisfied with the work I have done for them, determine the direction in which I travel. Sometimes I hear of a new neighborhood in which there is no resident artist of ability, and remove thither on speculation. Sometimes my friends among the picture-dealers say a good word on my behalf to their rich cus-

tomers, and so pave the way for me in the large towns. Sometimes my prosperous and famous brother-artists, hearing of small commissions which it is not worth their while to accept, mention my name, and procure me introductions to pleasant country-houses. Thus I get on, now in one way, now in another; not winning a reputation or making a fortune, but happier, perhaps, on the whole, than many men who have got both the one and the other. So, at least, I try to think now; though I started, in my youth, with as high an ambition as the best of them. Thank God, it is not my business here to speak of past times and their disappointments. A twinge of the old, hopeless heart-ache comes over me sometimes still, when I think of my student-days.

One peculiarity of my present way of life is, that it brings me into contact with all sorts of characters. I almost feel, by this time, as if I had painted every civilized variety of the human race. Upon the whole, my experience of the world, rough as it has been, has not taught me to think unkindly of my fellow-creatures. I have certainly received such treatment, at the hands of some of my sitters, as I could not describe without saddening and shocking any kind-hearted reader; but, taking one year and one place with another, I have cause to remember with gratitude and respect, sometimes even with friendship and affection, a very large proportion of the numerous persons who have employed me.

Some of the results of my experience are curious in a

moral point of view. For example, I have found women almost uniformly less delicate in asking me about my terms, and less generous in remunerating me for my services, than men. On the other hand, men, within my knowledge, are decidedly vainer of their personal attractions, and more vexatiously anxious to have them done full justice to on canvas, than women. Taking both sexes together, I have found young people, for the most part, more gentle, more reasonable, and more considerate than old. And summing up, in a general way, my experience of different ranks (which extends, let me premise, all the way down from peers to publicans), I have met with most of my formal and ungracious receptions among rich people of uncertain social standing: the highest classes and the lowest, among my employers, almost always contrive — in widely different ways, of course — to make me feel at home as soon as I enter their houses.

The one great obstacle that I have to contend against, in the practice of my profession, is not, as some persons may imagine, the difficulty of making my sitters keep their heads still while I paint them, but the difficulty of getting them to preserve the natural look, and the everyday peculiarities of dress and manner. People will assume an expression, will brush up their hair, will correct any little characteristic carelessness in their apparel,—will, in short, when they want to have their likenesses taken, look as if they were sitting for their pictures. If I paint them under these artificial circumstances, I fail, of course,

to present them in their habitual aspect ; and my portrait, as a necessary consequence, disappoints everybody, the sitter always included. When we wish to judge of a man's character by his handwriting, we want his customary scrawl dashed off with his common work-a-day pen, not his best small-text traced laboriously with the finest crow-quill point. So it is with portrait-painting, which is, after all, nothing but a right reading of the externals of character recognizably presented to the view of others.

Experience, after repeated trials, has proved to me that the only way of getting sitters who persist in assuming a set look, to resume their habitual expression, is to lead them into talking about some subject in which they are greatly interested. If I can only beguile them into speaking earnestly, no matter on what topic, I am sure of recovering their natural expression ; sure of seeing all the little, precious, every-day peculiarities of the man or woman peep out, one after another, quite unawares. The long, maundering stories about nothing, the wearisome recitals of petty grievances, the local anecdotes, unrelieved by the faintest suspicion of any thing like general interest, which I have been condemned to hear, as a consequence of thawing the ice off the features of formal sitters by the method just described, would fill hundreds of volumes, and promote the repose of thousands of readers. On the other hand, if I have suffered under the tediousness of the many, I have not been without my compensating gains from the wisdom and experience of the few. To some of

my sitters, I have been indebted for information which has enlarged my mind ; to some, for advice which has lightened my heart ; to some, for narratives of strange adventure which riveted my attention at the time, which have served to interest and amuse my fireside circle for many years past, and which are now, I would fain hope, destined to make kind friends for me among a wider audience than any that I have yet addressed.

Singularly enough, almost all the best stories that I have heard from my sitters have been told by accident. I only remember two cases in which a story was volunteered to me ; and, although I have often tried the experiment, I cannot call to mind even a single instance in which leading questions (as the lawyers call them) on my part, addressed to a sitter, ever produced any result worth recording. Over and over again, I have been disastrously successful in encouraging dull people to weary me. But the clever people who have something interesting to say, seem, so far as I have observed them, to acknowledge no other stimulant than chance. For every story which I propose including in the present collection, excepting one, I have been indebted, in the first instance, to the capricious influence of this same chance. Something my sitter has seen about me, something I have remarked in my sitter, or in the room in which I take the likeness, or in the neighborhood through which I pass on my way to work, has suggested the necessary associations, or has started the right train of recollections ; and then the story

appeared to begin of its own accord. Occasionally the most casual notice, on my part, of some very unpromising object, has smoothed the way for the relation of a long and interesting narrative. I first heard one of the most dramatic of the stories that will be presented in this book merely through being carelessly inquisitive to know the history of a stuffed poodle-dog.

It is thus not without reason that I lay some stress on the desirableness of prefacing each one of the following narratives by a brief account of the curious manner in which I became possessed of it. As to my capacity for repeating these stories correctly, I can answer for it that my memory may be trusted. I may claim it as a merit, because it is, after all, a mechanical one, that I forget nothing, and that I can call long-past conversations and events as readily to my recollection, as if they had happened but a few weeks ago. Of two things, at least, I felt tolerably certain beforehand, in meditating over the contents of this book: first, that I can repeat correctly all that I have heard; and, secondly, that I have never missed any thing worth hearing when my sitters were addressing me on an interesting subject. Although I cannot take the lead in talking while I am engaged in painting, I can listen while others speak, and work all the better for it.

So much in the way of general preface to the pages for which I am about to ask the reader's attention. Let me now advance to particulars, and describe how I came to hear the first story in the present collection. I begin with

it because it is the story that I have oftenest “rehearsed,” to borrow a phrase from the stage. Wherever I go, I am, sooner or later, sure to tell it. Only last night I was persuaded into repeating it once more, by the inhabitants of the farm-house in which I am now staying.

Not many years ago, on returning from a short holiday-visit to a friend settled in Paris, I found professional letters awaiting me at my agent's in London, which required my immediate presence in Liverpool. Without stopping to unpack, I proceeded, by the first conveyance, to my new destination; and, calling at the picture-dealer's shop where portrait-painting engagements were received for me, found, to my great satisfaction, that I had remunerative employment in prospect, in and about Liverpool, for at least two months to come. I was putting up my letters in high spirits, and was just leaving the picture-dealer's shop to look out for comfortable lodgings, when I was met at the door by the landlord of one of the largest hotels in Liverpool,—an old acquaintance whom I had known as manager of a tavern in London in my student-days.

“Mr. Kerby!” he exclaimed in great astonishment. “What an unexpected meeting! The last man in the world whom I expected to see, and yet the very man whose services I want to make use of.”

“What! more work for me?” said I. “Are all the people in Liverpool going to have their portraits painted?”

“I only know of one,” replied the landlord, — “a gentleman staying at my hotel, who wants a chalk-drawing

done of him. I was on my way here to inquire for any artist whom our picture-dealing friend could recommend. How glad I am that I met you before I had committed myself to employing a stranger !”

“Is this likeness wanted at once?” I asked, thinking of the number of engagements that I had already got in my pocket.

“Immediately, to-day ; this very hour, if possible,” said the landlord. “Mr. Faulkner, the gentleman I am speaking of, was to have sailed yesterday, for the Brazils, from this place ; but the wind shifted, last night, to the wrong quarter, and he came ashore again this morning. He may, of course, be detained here some time ; but he may also be called on board ship at half an hour’s notice, if the wind shifts back again in the right direction. This uncertainty makes it a matter of importance that the likeness should be begun immediately. Undertake it if you possibly can ; for Mr. Faulkner is a liberal gentleman, who is sure to give you your own terms.”

I reflected for a minute or two. The portrait was only wanted in chalk, and would not take long ; besides, I might finish it in the evening, if my other engagements pressed hard upon me in the daytime. Why not leave my luggage at the picture-dealer’s, put off looking for lodgings till night, and secure the new commission boldly, by going back at once with the landlord to the hotel ? I decided on following this course almost as soon as the idea occurred to me, put my chalks in my pocket, and a

sheet of drawing-paper in the first of my portfolios that came to hand, and so presented myself before Mr. Faulkner, ready to take his likeness, literally at five minutes' notice.

I found him a very pleasant, intelligent man, young and handsome. He had been a great traveller; had visited all the wonders of the East, and was now about to explore the wilds of the vast South-American continent. Thus much he told me, good-humoredly and unconstrainedly, while I was preparing my drawing-materials.

As soon as I had put him in the right light and position, and had seated myself opposite to him, he changed the subject of conversation, and asked me, a little confusedly as I thought, if it was not a customary practice among portrait-painters to gloss over the faults in their sitters' faces, and to make as much as possible of any good points which their features might possess.

"Certainly," I answered. "You have described the whole art and mystery of successful portrait-painting in a few words."

"May I beg, then," said he, "that you will depart from the usual practice in my case, and draw me with all my defects, exactly as I am? The fact is," he went on, after a moment's pause, "the likeness you are now preparing to take is intended for my mother. My roving disposition makes me a great anxiety to her, and she parted from me this last time very sadly and unwillingly. I don't know how the idea came into my head; but it struck me this

morning that I could not better employ the time, while I was delayed here on shore, than by getting my likeness done to send to her as a keepsake. She has no portrait of me since I was a child, and she is sure to value a drawing of me more than any thing else I could send her. I only trouble you with this explanation to prove that I am really sincere in my wish to be drawn unflatteringly, — exactly as I am.”

Secretly respecting and admiring him for what he had just said, I promised that his directions should be implicitly followed, and began to work immediately. Before I had pursued my occupation for ten minutes, the conversation began to flag, and the usual obstacle to my success with a sitter gradually set itself up between us. Quite unconsciously, of course, Mr. Faulkner stiffened his neck, shut his mouth, and contracted his eyebrows, evidently under the impression that he was facilitating the process of taking his portrait by making his face as like a lifeless mass as possible. All traces of his natural animated expression were fast disappearing, and he was beginning to change into a heavy and rather melancholy-looking man.

This complete alteration was of no great consequence so long as I was only engaged in drawing the outline of his face, and the general form of his features. I accordingly worked on doggedly for more than an hour, then left off to point my chucks again, and to give my sitter a few minutes' rest. Thus far the likeness had not suffered through Mr. Faulkner's unfortunate notion of the right way of sitting

for his portrait ; but the time of difficulty, as I well knew, was to come. It was impossible for me to think of putting any expression into the drawing unless I could contrive some means, when he resumed his chair, of making him look like himself again. "I will talk to him about foreign parts," thought I, "and try if I can't make him forget that he is sitting for his picture in that way."

While I was pointing my chalks, Mr. Faulkner was walking up and down the room. He chanced to see the portfolio I had brought with me leaning against the wall, and asked if there were any sketches in it. I told him there were a few which I had made during my recent stay in Paris. "In Paris?" he repeated, with a look of interest: "may I see them?"

I gave him the permission he asked, as a matter of course. Sitting down, he took the portfolio on his knee, and began to look through it. He turned over the first five sketches rapidly enough ; but when he came to the sixth, I saw his face flush directly, and observed that he took the drawing out of the portfolio, carried it to the window, and remained silently absorbed in the contemplation of it for full five minutes. After that, he turned round to me, and asked very anxiously if I had any objection to part with that sketch.

It was the least interesting drawing of the collection, — merely a view in one of the streets running by the backs of the houses in the Palais Royal. Some four or five of these houses were comprised in the view, which was of no

particular use to me in any way, and which was too valueless, as a work of art, for me to think of selling it. I begged his acceptance of it at once. He thanked me quite warmly; and then, seeing that I looked a little surprised at the odd selection he had made from my sketches, laughingly asked me if I could guess why he had been so anxious to become possessed of the view which I had given him?

“Probably,” I answered, “there is some remarkable historical association connected with that street at the back of the Palais Royal, of which I am ignorant.”

“No,” said Mr. Faulkner; “at least, none that *I* know of. The only association connected with the place in *my* mind is a purely personal association. Look at this house in your drawing, — the house with the water-pipe running down it from top to bottom. I once passed a night there, — a night I shall never forget to the day of my death. I have had some awkward travelling-adventures in my time; but *that* adventure — Well, never mind, suppose we begin the sitting. I make but a bad return for your kindness in giving me the sketch, by thus wasting your time in mere talk.”

“Come, come!” thought I, as he went back to the sitter’s chair, “I shall see your natural expression on your face if I can only get you to talk about that adventure.” It was easy enough to lead him in the right direction. At the first hint from me, he returned to the subject of the house in the back-street. Without, I hope, show-

ing any undue curiosity, I contrived to let him see that I felt a deep interest in every thing he now said. After two or three preliminary hesitations, he at last, to my great joy, fairly started on the narrative of his adventure. In the interest of his subject, he soon completely forgot that he was sitting for his portrait; the very expression that I wanted came over his face, and my drawing proceeded towards completion, in the right direction, and to the best purpose. At every fresh touch I felt more and more certain that I was now getting the better of my grand difficulty; and I enjoyed the additional gratification of having my work lightened by the recital of a true story, which possessed, in my estimation, all the excitement of the most exciting romance.

This, as I recollect it, is how Mr. Faulkner told me his adventure.

THE TRAVELLER'S STORY

OF

A TERRIBLY STRANGE BED.

SHORTLY after my education at college was finished, I happened to be staying at Paris with an English friend. We were both young men then, and lived, I am afraid, rather a wild life, in the delightful city of our sojourn. One night we were idling about the neighborhood of the Palais Royal, doubtful to what amusement we should next betake ourselves. My friend proposed a visit to Frascati's, but his suggestion was not to my taste. I knew Frascati's, as the French saying is, by heart; had lost and won plenty of five-franc pieces there, merely for amusement's sake, until it was amusement no longer, and was thoroughly tired, in fact, of all

the ghastly respectabilities of such a social anomaly as a respectable gambling-house. "For heaven's sake," said I to my friend, "let us go somewhere where we can see a little genuine, blackguard, poverty-stricken gaming with no false gingerbread glitter thrown over it at all. Let us get away from fashionable Frascati's, to a house where they don't mind letting in a man with a ragged coat, or a man with no coat, ragged or otherwise." — "Very well," said my friend, "we needn't go out of the Palais Royal to find the sort of company you want. Here's the place just before us; as blackguard a place, by all report, as you could possibly wish to see." In another minute we arrived at the door, and entered the house, the back of which you have drawn in your sketch.

When we got up stairs, and had left our hats and sticks with the doorkeeper, we were admitted into the chief gambling-room. We did not find many people assembled there. But, few as the men were who looked up at us on our entrance, they were all types, lamentably true types, of their respective classes.

We had come to see blackguards ; but these men were something worse. There is a comic side, more or less appreciable, in all blackguardism. Here there was nothing but tragedy, — mute, weird tragedy. The quiet in the room was horrible. The thin, haggard, long-haired young man, whose sunken eyes fiercely watched the turning-up of the cards, never spoke ; the flabby, fat-faced, pimply player, who pricked his piece of pasteboard perseveringly, to register how often black won, and how often red, never spoke ; the dirty, wrinkled old man, with the vulture eyes, and the darned greatcoat, who had lost his last *sou*, and still looked on desperately, after he could play no longer, never spoke. Even the voice of the croupier sounded as if it were strangely dulled and thickened in the atmosphere of the room. I had entered the place to laugh ; but the spectacle before me was something to weep over. I soon found it necessary to take refuge, in excitement, from the depression of spirits which was fast stealing on me. Unfortunately I sought the nearest excitement by going to the table, and beginning to

play. Still more unfortunately, as the event will show, I won, — won prodigiously; won incredibly; won at such a rate, that the regular players at the table crowded round me, and staring at my stakes with hungry, superstitious eyes, whispered to one another, that the English stranger was going to break the bank.

The game was *Rouge et Noir*. I had played at it in every city in Europe, without, however, the care or the wish to study the theory of chances, that philosopher's stone of all gamblers. And a gambler, in the strict sense of the word, I had never been. I was heart-whole from the corroding passion for play. My gaming was a mere idle amusement. I never resorted to it by necessity, because I never knew what it was to want money. I never practised it so incessantly as to lose more than I could afford, or to gain more than I could coolly pocket without being thrown off my balance by my good luck. In short, I had hitherto frequented gambling-tables, just as I frequented ball-rooms and opera-houses, because they amused me, and because I had nothing better to do with my leisure hours.

But on this occasion it was very different. Now, for the first time in my life, I felt what the passion for play really was. My success first bewildered, and then, in the most literal meaning of the word, intoxicated me. Incredible as it may appear, it is nevertheless true, that I only lost when I attempted to estimate chances, and played according to previous calculation. If I left every thing to luck, and staked without any care or consideration, I was sure to win, — to win in the face of every recognized probability in favor of the bank. At first some of the men present ventured their money safely enough on my color; but I speedily increased my stakes to sums which they dared not risk. One after another, they left off playing, and breathlessly looked on at my game.

Still, time after time, I staked higher and higher, and still won. The excitement in the room rose to fever pitch. The silence was interrupted by a deep, muttered chorus of oaths and exclamations in different languages, every time the gold was shovelled across to my side of the table. Even the imperturbable croupier

dashed his rake on the floor in a (French) fury of astonishment at my success. But one man present preserved his self-possession; and that man was my friend. He came to my side, and, whispering in English, begged me to leave the place satisfied with what I had already gained. I must do him the justice to say that he repeated his warnings and entreaties several times; and only left me, and went away, after I had rejected his advice (I was, to all intents and purposes, gambling-drunk) in terms which rendered it impossible for him to address me again that night.

Shortly after he had gone, a hoarse voice behind me cried, "Permit me, my dear sir, permit me to restore to their proper place two Napoleons which you have dropped. Wonderful luck, sir! I pledge you my word of honor as an old soldier, in the course of my long experience in this sort of thing, I never saw such luck as yours, never! Go on, sir; *sacré mille bombes!* Go on boldly, and break the bank!"

I turned round, and saw, nodding and smiling at me with inveterate civility, a tall man, dressed in a frogged and braided surtout.

If I had been in my senses, I should have considered him, personally, as being rather a suspicious specimen of an old soldier. He had goggling, bloodshot eyes, mangy mustachios, and a broken nose. His voice betrayed a barrack-room intonation of the worst order; and he had the dirtiest pair of hands I ever saw, even in France. These little personal peculiarities exercised, however, no repelling influence on me. In the mad excitement, the reckless triumph, of that moment, I was ready to "fraternize" with anybody who encouraged me in my game. I accepted the old soldier's proffered pinch of snuff, clapped him on the back, and swore he was the honestest fellow in the world, — the most glorious relic of the Grand Army that I had ever met with. "Go on!" cried my military friend, snapping his fingers in ecstasy, — "go on, and win! Break the bank; *mille tonnerres!* My gallant English comrade, break the bank!"

And I *did* go on, — went on at such a rate, that in another quarter of an hour the croupier called out, "Gentlemen, the bank has discon-

tinued for to-night!" All the notes, and all the gold in that "bank," now lay in a heap under my hands; the whole floating capital of the gambling-house was waiting to pour into my pockets.

"Tie up the money in your pocket-handkerchief, my worthy sir," said the old soldier, as I wildly plunged my hands into my heap of gold. "Tie it up as we used to tie up a bit of dinner in the Grand Army: your winnings are too heavy for any breeches-pockets that ever were sewed. There, that's it. Shovel them in, notes and all. *Credié!* what luck! Stop! another Napoleon on the floor! *Ah! sacré petit polisson de Napoleon!* have I found thee at last? Now then, sir, two tight double-knots each way, with your honorable permission, and the money's safe. Feel it! feel it, fortunate sir! hard and round as a cannon-ball. *Ah, bah!* if they had only fired such cannon-balls at us at Austerlitz! *nom d'une pipe!* if they only had! And now, as an ancient grenadier, as an ex-brave of the French army, what remains for me to do? I ask what? Simply this: to entreat my valued

English friend to drink a bottle of champagne with me, and toast the goddess Fortune in foaming goblets before we part!"

"Excellent ex-brave! Convivial ancient grenadier! Champagne by all means! An English cheer for an old soldier! Hurrah! hurrah! Another English cheer for the goddess Fortune! Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

"Bravo! the Englishman; the amiable, gracious Englishman, in whose veins circulates the vivacious blood of France! Another glass? *Ah, bah!* the bottle is empty. Never mind! *Vive le vin!* I, the old soldier, order another bottle, and half a pound of *bonbons* with it!"

"No no, ex-brave; never, ancient grenadier! *Your* bottle last time; *my* bottle this. Behold it! Toast away! The French army! the great Napoleon! the present company! the croupier! the honest croupier's wife and daughters — if he has any! the ladies generally! Everybody in the world!"

By the time the second bottle of champagne was emptied, I felt as if I had been drinking liquid fire: my brain seemed all aflame. No

excess in wine had ever had this effect on me before in my life. Was it the result of a stimulant acting upon my system when I was in a highly excited state? Was my stomach in a particularly disordered condition? Or was the champagne amazingly strong?

“Ex-brave of the French army!” cried I, in a mad state of exhilaration, “*I am* on fire! how are *you*? You have set me on fire! Do you hear, my hero of Austerlitz? Let us have a third bottle of champagne to put the flame out!”

The old soldier wagged his head, rolled his goggle eyes, until I expected to see them slip out of their sockets; placed his dirty forefinger by the side of his broken nose; solemnly ejaculated “Coffee!” and immediately ran off into an inner room.

The word pronounced by the eccentric veteran seemed to have a magical effect on the rest of the company present. With one accord they all rose to depart. Probably they had expected to profit by my intoxication; but, finding that my new friend was benevolently bent

on preventing me from getting dead-drunk, had now abandoned all hope of thriving pleasantly on my winnings. Whatever their motive might be, at any rate they went away in a body. When the old soldier returned, and sat down again opposite to me at the table, we had the room to ourselves. I could see the croupier, in a sort of vestibule which opened out of it, eating his supper in solitude. The silence was now deeper than ever.

A sudden change, too, had come over the "ex-brave." He assumed a portentously solemn look; and, when he spoke to me again, his speech was ornamented by no oaths, enforced by no finger-snapping, enlivened by no apostrophes or exclamations.

"Listen, my dear sir," said he, in mysteriously confidential tones, — "listen to an old soldier's advice. I have been to the mistress of this house (a very charming woman, with a genius for cookery), to impress on her the necessity of making us some particularly strong and good coffee. You must drink this coffee in order to get rid of your little amiable exaltation of

spirits before you think of going home, — you *must*, my good and gracious friend! With all that money to take home to-night, it is a sacred duty to yourself to have your wits about you. You are known to be a winner, to an enormous extent, by several gentlemen present to-night, who, in a certain point of view, are very worthy and excellent fellows; but they are mortal men, my dear sir, and they have their amiable weaknesses! Need I say more? Ah, no, no! you understand me. Now, this is what you must do, — send for a cabriolet when you feel quite well again, draw up all the windows when you get into it, and tell the driver to take you home only through the large and well-lighted thoroughfares. Do this, and you and your money will be safe. Do this, and to-morrow you will thank an old soldier for giving you a word of honest advice.”

Just as the ex-brave ended his oration in very lachrymose tones, the coffee came in, ready poured out in two cups. My attentive friend handed me one of the cups with a bow. I was parched with thirst, and drank it off at a

draught. Almost instantly afterwards, I was seized with a fit of giddiness, and felt more completely intoxicated than ever. The room whirled round and round furiously; the old soldier seemed to be regularly bobbing up and down before me like the piston of the steam-engine. I was half deafened by a violent singing in my ears; a feeling of utter bewilderment, helplessness, idiocy, overcame me. I rose from my chair, holding on by the table to keep my balance; and stammered out, that I felt dreadfully unwell, — so unwell that I did not know how I was to get home.

“My dear friend,” answered the old soldier, and even his voice seemed to be bobbing up and down as he spoke, — “my dear friend, it would be madness to go home in *your* state; you would be sure to lose your money; you might be robbed and murdered with the greatest ease. *I* am going to sleep here: do *you* sleep here too. They make up capital beds in this house: take one, sleep off the effects of the wine, and go home safely with your winnings to-morrow, — to-morrow, in broad daylight.”

I had but two ideas left, —one, that I must never let go hold of my handkerchief full of money; the other, that I must lie down somewhere immediately, and fall off into a comfortable sleep. So I agreed to the proposal about the bed, and took the offered arm of the old soldier, carrying my money with my disengaged hand. Preceded by the croupier, we passed along some passages, and up a flight of stairs, into the bedroom which I was to occupy. The ex-brave shook me warmly by the hand, proposed that we should breakfast together, and then, followed by the croupier, left me for the night.

I ran to the wash-stand; drank some of the water in my jug; poured the rest out, and plunged my face into it; then sat down in a chair, and tried to compose myself. I soon felt better. The change for my lungs, from the fetid atmosphere of the gambling-room to the cool air of the apartment I now occupied; the almost equally refreshing change for my eyes, from the glaring gas-lights of the “salon” to the dim, quiet flicker of one bedroom candle, —

aided wonderfully the restorative effects of cold water. The giddiness left me, and I began to feel a little like a reasonable being again. My first thought was of the risk of sleeping all night in a gambling-house; my second, of the still greater risk of trying to get out after the house was closed, and of going home alone at night, through the streets of Paris, with a large sum of money about me. I had slept in worse places than this on my travels: so I determined to lock, bolt, and barricade my door, and take my chance till the next morning.

Accordingly, I secured myself against all intrusion; looked under the bed, and into the cupboard; tried the fastening of the window; and then, satisfied that I had taken every proper precaution, pulled off my upper clothing, put my light, which was a dim one, on the hearth among a feathery litter of wood-ashes, and got into bed, with the handkerchief full of money under my pillow.

I soon felt not only that I could not go to sleep, but that I could not even close my eyes. I was wide awake, and in a high fever. Every

nerve in my body trembled ; every one of my senses seemed to be preternaturally sharpened. I tossed and rolled, and tried every kind of position, and perseveringly sought out the cold corners of the bed, and all to no purpose. Now I thrust my arms over the clothes ; now I poked them under the clothes. Now I violently shot my legs straight out down to the bottom of the bed ; now I convulsively coiled them up as near my chin as they would go. Now I shook out my crumpled pillow, changed it to the cool side, patted it flat, and lay down quietly on my back ; now I fiercely doubled it in two, set it up on end, thrust it against the board of the bed, and tried a sitting-posture. Every effort was in vain. I groaned with vexation, as I felt that I was in for a sleepless night.

What could I do ? I had no book to read. And yet, unless I found out some method of diverting my mind, I felt certain that I was in the condition to imagine all sorts of horrors, to rack my brain with forebodings of every possible and impossible danger, in short, to pass the night in suffering all conceivable varieties of nervous terror.

I raised myself on my elbow, and looked about the room, which was brightened by a lovely moonlight pouring straight through the window, to see if it contained any pictures or ornaments that I could at all clearly distinguish. While my eyes wandered from wall to wall, a remembrance of Le Maistre's delightful little book, "*Voyage autour de ma Chambre*," occurred to me. I resolved to imitate the French author, and find occupation and amusement enough to relieve the tedium of my wakefulness, by making a mental inventory of every article of furniture I could see, and by following up to their sources the multitude of associations which even a chair, a table, or a wash-hand stand may be made to call forth.

In the nervous, unsettled state of my mind at that moment, I found it much easier to make my inventory than to make my reflections, and thereupon soon gave up all hope of thinking in Le Maistre's fanciful track, or, indeed, of thinking at all. I looked about the room at the different articles of furniture, and did nothing more.

There was, first, the bed I was lying in, — a four-post bed, of all things in the world, to meet with in Paris! yes, a thorough, clumsy British four-poster, with the regular top lined with chintz, the regular fringed valance all round, the regular stifling, unwholesome curtains, which I remembered having mechanically drawn back against the posts, without particularly noticing the bed, when I first got into the room. Then there was the marble-topped wash-hand stand, from which the water I had spilt, in my hurry to pour it out, was still dripping, slowly and more slowly, on to the brick floor. Then two small chairs with my coat, waistcoat, and trousers flung on them. Then a large elbow-chair, covered with dirty white dimity, with my cravat and shirt-collar thrown over the back. Then a chest of drawers with two of the brass handles off, and a tawdry, broken china inkstand placed on it by way of ornament for the top. Then the dressing-table, adorned by a very small looking-glass, and a very large pin-cushion. Then the window, an unusually large window. Then a dark old picture, which the

feeble candle dimly showed me. It was the picture of a fellow in a high Spanish hat, crowned with a plume of towering feathers. A swarthy, sinister ruffian, looking upward, shading his eyes with his hand, and looking intently upward, it might be at some tall gallows at which he was going to be hanged. At any rate, he had the appearance of thoroughly deserving it.

The picture put a kind of constraint upon me to look upward, too, at the top of the bed. It was a gloomy, and not an interesting object; and I looked back at the picture. I counted the feathers in the man's hat: they stood out in relief, — three white, two green. I observed the crown of his hat, which was of a conical shape, according to the fashion supposed to have been favored by Guido Fawkes. I wondered what he was looking up at. It couldn't be at the stars: such a desperado was neither astrologer nor astronomer. It must be at the high gallows, and he was going to be hanged presently. Would the executioner come into possession of his conical crowned hat, and plume of feathers?

I counted the feathers again, — three white, two green.

While I still lingered over this very improving and intellectual employment, my thoughts insensibly began to wander. The moonlight shining into the room reminded me of a certain moonlight night in England, the night after a picnic party in a Welsh valley. Every incident of the drive homeward through lovely scenery, which the moonlight made lovelier than ever, came back to my remembrance, though I had never given the picnic a thought for years; though, if I had *tried* to recollect it, I could certainly have recalled little or nothing of that scene long past. Of all the wonderful faculties that help to tell us we are immortal, which speaks the sublime truth more eloquently than memory? Here was I, in a strange house of the most suspicious character, in a situation of uncertainty, and even of peril, which might seem to make the cool exercise of my recollection almost out of the question; nevertheless remembering, quite involuntarily, places, people, conversations, minute circumstances of every

kind, which I had thought forgotten forever, which I could not possibly have recalled at will, even under the most favorable auspices. And what cause had produced, in a moment, the whole of this strange, complicated, mysterious effect? Nothing but some rays of moonlight shining in at my bedroom window.

I was still thinking of the picnic, of our merriment on the drive home, of the sentimental young lady who *would* quote Childe Harold because it was moonlight; I was absorbed by these past scenes and past amusements, — when, in an instant, the thread on which my memories hung snapped asunder; my attention immediately came back to present things more vividly than ever; and I found myself, I neither knew why nor wherefore, looking hard at the picture again.

Looking for what?

Good God! the man had pulled his hat down on his brows! No, the hat itself was gone! Where was the conical crown? Where the feathers, — three white, two green? Not there. In place of the hat and feathers, what dusky

object was it that now hid his forehead, his eyes, his shading hand?

Was the bed moving?

I turned on my back, and looked up. Was I mad? drunk? dreaming? giddy again? Or was the top of the bed really moving down, sinking slowly, regularly, silently, horribly, right down throughout the whole of its length and breadth, right down upon me, as I lay underneath?

My blood seemed to stand still. A deadly, paralyzing coldness stole all over me, as I turned my head round on the pillow, and determined to test whether the bed-top was really moving or not, by keeping my eye on the man in the picture.

The next look in that direction was enough. The dull, black, frowzy outline of the valance above me was within an inch of being parallel with his waist. I still looked breathlessly; and steadily, and slowly, very slowly, I saw the figure, and the line of frame below the figure, vanish, as the valance moved down before it.

I am, constitutionally, any thing but timid.

I have been, on more than one occasion, in peril of my life, and have not lost my self-possession for an instant; but when the conviction first settled on my mind that the bed-top was really moving, was steadily and continuously sinking down upon me, I looked up shuddering, helpless, panic-stricken, beneath the hideous machinery for murder, which was advancing closer and closer to suffocate me where I lay.

I looked up motionless, speechless, breathless. The candle, fully spent, went out; but the moonlight still brightened the room. Down and down, without pausing and without sounding, came the bed-top; and still my panic-terror seemed to bind me faster and faster to the mattress on which I lay. Down and down it sank, till the dusty odor from the lining of the canopy came stealing into my nostrils.

At that final moment, the instinct of self-preservation startled me out of my trance, and I moved at last. There was just room for me to roll myself sideways off the bed. As I dropped noiselessly to the floor, the edge of the murderous canopy touched me on the shoulder.

Without stopping to draw my breath, without wiping the cold sweat from my face, I rose instantly on my knees to watch the bed-top. I was literally spellbound by it. If I had heard footsteps behind me, I could not have turned round; if a means of escape had been miraculously provided for me, I could not have moved to take advantage of it. The whole life in me was, at that moment, concentrated in my eyes.

It descended; the whole canopy, with the fringe round it, came down, down, close down, so close that there was not room now to squeeze my finger between the bed-top and the bed. I felt at the sides, and discovered that what had appeared to me, from beneath, to be the ordinary light canopy of a four-post bed, was in reality a thick, broad mattress, the substance of which was concealed by the valance and its fringe. I looked up, and saw the four posts rising hideously bare. In the middle of the bed-top was a huge wooden screw that had evidently worked it down through a hole in the ceiling, just as ordinary presses are worked down on the sub-

stance selected for compression. The frightful apparatus moved without making the faintest noise. There had been no creaking as it came down: there was now not the faintest sound from the room above. Amid a dead and awful silence, I beheld before me, in the nineteenth century, and in the civilized capital of France, such a machine for secret murder by suffocation as might have existed in the worst days of the Inquisition, in the lonely inns among the Hartz Mountains, in the mysterious tribunals of Westphalia! Still, as I looked on it, I could not move; I could hardly breathe; but I began to recover the power of thinking, and in a moment I discovered the murderous conspiracy framed against me, in all its horror.

My cup of coffee had been drugged, and drugged too strongly. I had been saved from being smothered by having taken an overdose of some narcotic. How I had chafed and fretted at the fever-fit which had preserved my life by keeping me awake! How recklessly I had confided myself to the two wretches who had led me into this room, determined, for the sake

of my winnings, to kill me in my sleep by the surest and most horrible contrivance for secretly accomplishing my destruction! How many men, winners like me, had slept, as I had proposed to sleep, in that bed, and had never been seen or heard of more! I shuddered at the bare idea of it.

But, ere long, all thought was again suspended by the sight of the murderous canopy moving once more. After it had remained on the bed, as nearly as I could guess, about ten minutes, it began to move up again. The villains who worked it from above evidently believed that their purpose was now accomplished. Slowly and silently, as it had descended, that horrible bed-top rose towards its former place. When it reached the upper extremities of the four posts, it reached the ceiling too. Neither hole nor screw could be seen; the bed became, in appearance, an ordinary bed again, the canopy an ordinary canopy, even to the most suspicious eyes.

Now, for the first time, I was able to move, to rise from my knees, to dress myself in my

upper clothing, and to consider of how I should escape. If I betrayed, by the slightest noise, that the attempt to suffocate me had failed, I was certain to be murdered. Had I made any noise already? I listened intently, looking towards the door.

No! no footsteps in the passage outside; no sound of a tread, light or heavy, in the room above: absolute silence everywhere. Besides locking and bolting my door, I had moved an old wooden chest against it, which I had found under the bed. To remove this chest (my blood ran cold as I thought what its contents *might* be), without making some disturbance, was impossible; and, moreover, to think of escaping through the house, now barred up for the night, was sheer insanity. Only one chance was left me, — the window. I stole to it on tiptoe.

My bedroom was on the first floor, above an *entresol*, and looked into the back street which you have sketched in your view. I raised my hand to open the window, knowing that on that action hung, by the merest hair's breadth,

my chance of safety. They keep vigilant watch in a house of murder. If any part of the frame cracked, if the hinge creaked, I was a lost man! It must have occupied me at least five minutes, reckoning by time, — five *hours*, reckoning by suspense, — to open that window. I succeeded in doing it silently, in doing it with all the dexterity of a housebreaker, and then looked down into the street. To leap the distance beneath me would be almost certain destruction. Next I looked round at the sides of the house. Down the left side ran the thick water-pipe which you have drawn: it passed close by the outer edge of the window. The moment I saw the pipe, I knew I was saved. My breath came and went freely for the first time since I had seen the canopy of the bed moving down upon me.

To some men, the means of escape which I had discovered might have seemed difficult and dangerous enough: to *me*, the prospect of slipping down the pipe into the street did not suggest even a thought of peril. I had always been accustomed, by the practice of gymnastics,

to keep up my schoolboy powers as a daring and expert climber; and knew that my head, hands, and feet would serve me faithfully in any hazards of ascent or descent. I had already got one leg over the window-sill, when I remembered the handkerchief filled with money under my pillow. I could well have afforded to leave it behind me; but I was revengefully determined that the miscreants of the gambling-house should miss their plunder, as well as their victim. So I went back to the bed, and tied the heavy handkerchief at my back by my cravat.

Just as I had made it tight, and fixed it in a comfortable place, I thought I heard a sound of breathing outside the door. The chill feeling of horror ran through me again as I listened. No! dead silence still in the passage: I had only heard the night-air blowing softly into the room. The next moment I was on the window-sill; and the next I had a firm grip on the water-pipe with my hands and knees.

I slid down into the street easily and quietly, as I thought I should, and immediately set off,

at the top of my speed, to a branch "prefecture" of police, which I knew was situated in the immediate neighborhood. A "sub-prefect," and several picked men among his subordinates, happened to be up, maturing, I believe, some scheme for discovering the perpetrator of a mysterious murder which all Paris was talking of just then. When I began my story in a breathless hurry, and in very bad French, I could see that the sub-prefect suspected me of being a drunken Englishman who had robbed somebody; but he soon altered his opinion as I went on; and, before I had any thing like concluded, he shoved all the papers before him into a drawer, put on his hat, supplied me with another (for I was bareheaded), ordered a file of soldiers, desired his expert followers to get ready all sort of tools for breaking open doors, and ripping up brick flooring, and took my arm, in the most friendly and familiar manner possible, to lead me with him out of the house. I will venture to say, that when the sub-prefect was a little boy, and was taken for the first time to the play, he was not half as much

pleased as he was now at the job in prospect for him at the gambling-house.

Away we went through the streets, the sub-prefect cross-examining and congratulating me in the same breath, as we marched at the head of our formidable *posse comitatus*. Sentinels were placed at the back and front of the house the moment we got to it. A tremendous battery of knocks was directed against the door; a light appeared at the window; I was told to conceal myself behind the police. Then came more knocks, and a cry of "Open, in the name of the law!" At that terrible summons, bolts and locks gave way before an invisible hand; and, the moment after, the sub-prefect was in the passage, confronting a waiter, half-dressed, and ghastly pale. This was the short dialogue which immediately took place:—

"We want to see the Englishman who is sleeping in this house."

"He went away hours ago."

"He did no such thing. His friend went away: *he* remained. Show us to his bedroom."

“I swear to you, M. le Sous-prefet, he is not here. He” —

“I swear to you, M. le Garçon, he is. He slept here; he didn’t find your bed comfortable; he came to us to complain of it; here he is, among my men; and here am I, ready to look for a flea or two in his bedstead. Renaudin!” (calling to one of the subordinates, and pointing to the waiter), “collar that man, and tie his hands behind him. Now, then, gentlemen, let us walk up stairs.”

Every man and woman in the house was secured, — the “old soldier” the first. Then I identified the bed in which I had slept; and then we went into the room above.

No object that was at all extraordinary appeared in any part of it. The sub-prefect looked round the place, commanded everybody to be silent, stamped twice on the floor, called for a candle, looked attentively at the spot he had stamped on, and ordered the flooring there to be carefully taken up. This was done in no time. Lights were produced; and we saw a deep, raftered cavity between the floor

of this room, and the ceiling of the room beneath. Through this cavity, there ran perpendicularly a sort of case of iron, thickly greased; and inside the case appeared the screw, which communicated with the bed-top below. Extra lengths of screw, freshly oiled; levers, covered with felt; all the complete upper works of a heavy press, constructed with infernal ingenuity so as to join the fixtures below, and, when taken to pieces again, to go into the smallest possible compass, — were next discovered, and pulled out upon the floor. After some little difficulty, the sub-prefect succeeded in putting the machinery together, and, leaving his men to work it, descended with me to the bedroom. The smothering canopy was then lowered, but not so noiselessly as I had seen it lowered. When I mentioned this to the sub-prefect, his answer, simple as it was, had a terrible significance. “My men,” said he, “are working down the bed-top for the first time: the men whose money you won were in better practice.”

We left the house in the sole possession of two police-agents, every one of the inmates

being removed to prison on the spot. The sub-prefect, after taking down my *procès verbal* in his office, returned with me to my hotel to get my passport. "Do you think," I asked, as I gave it to him, "that any men have really been smothered in that bed, as they tried to smother *me*?"

"I have seen dozens of drowned men laid out at the Morgue," answered the Sub-prefect, "in whose pocket-books were found letters, stating that they had committed suicide in the Seine, because they had lost every thing at the gaming-table. Do I know how many of those men entered the same gambling-house that *you* entered, won as *you* won, took that bed as *you* took it, slept in it, were smothered in it, and were privately thrown into the river, with a letter of explanation written by the murderers, and placed in their pocket-books? No man can say how many, or how few, have suffered the fate from which you have escaped. The people of the gambling-house kept their bedstead-machinery a secret from *us*, even from the police. The dead kept the rest of the secret from them.

Good-night, or, rather, good-morning, M. Faulkner! Be at my office again at nine o'clock. In the mean time, *au revoir!*"

The rest of my story is soon told. I was examined and re-examined; the gambling-house was strictly searched all through, from top to bottom; the prisoners were separately interrogated; and two of the less guilty among them made a confession. *I* discovered that the old soldier was the master of the gambling-house: *justice* discovered that he had been drummed out of the army, as a vagabond, years ago; that he had been guilty of all sorts of villanies since, that he was in possession of stolen property, which the owners identified; and that he, the croupier, another accomplice, and the woman who had made my cup of coffee, were all in the secret of the bedstead. There appeared some reason to doubt whether the inferior persons attached to the house knew any thing of the suffocating machinery; and they received the benefit of that doubt, by being treated simply as thieves and vagabonds. As for the old soldier and his two head-myrmidons, they went to

the galleys; the woman who had drugged my coffee was imprisoned for I forget how many years; the regular attendants at the gambling-house were considered "suspicious," and placed under "surveillance;" and I became, for one whole week (which is a long time), the head "lion" in Parisian society. My adventure was dramatized by three illustrious playmakers, but never saw theatrical daylight; for the censorship forbade the introduction, on the stage, of a correct copy of the gambling-house bedstead.

One good result was produced by my adventure, which any censorship must have approved: it cured me of ever again trying *Rouge et Noir* as an amusement. The sight of a green cloth, with packs of cards and heaps of money on it, will henceforth be forever associated, in my mind, with the sight of a bed-canopy descending to suffocate me in the silence and darkness of the night.

Just as Mr. Faulkner pronounced these words, he started in his chair, and resumed his stiff, dignified position in a great hurry. "Bless my soul!" cried he, with a comic look of astonishment and vexation, "while I

have been telling you what is the real secret of my interest in the sketch you have so kindly given to me, I have altogether forgotten that I came here to sit for my portrait. For the last hour, or more, I must have been the worst model you ever had to draw from."

"On the contrary, you have been the best," said I. "I have been trying to catch your likeness; and, while telling your story, you have unconsciously shown me the natural expression I wanted to insure my success."

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